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Rehearsing Reality: An Interactive
Docufragmentary Exploration of the Theatre
of the Oppressed's Engagement with the
Brazilian Landless Movement (MST)

Nenita Gouveia Simões

Degree awarded by the
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Abstract

This thesis explores the Theatre of the Oppressed's practices at the point of interaction with peasants of Brazil's Landless Movement. It uses the interactive *docufragmentary* entitled *Rehearsing Reality* to explore the social and political role of art, and to ask whether particular applications of theatre and film can be used to understand and possibly transform points of view and raise consciousness about contemporary issues in the world.

The Theatre of the Oppressed created by Augusto Boal comprises a series of interactive games, exercises and other theatrical methods developed with the purpose of using these drama techniques as a subjective medium contributing both to question and search alternatives for personal and social problems. Amongst its theatrical methods is Forum Theatre, the main practice adopted by Brazil's Landless Movement. This technique breaks with the conventions of the traditional language of theatre. Its main aim is to transform passive audiences into active participants of a theatrical scene. This thesis argues that Forum Theatre is an open medium that offers people the chance to participate democratically in the theatrical space in order to suggest and rehearse new ideas to be applied into their lives.

In order to explore how these theatrical experiences work in practice this thesis includes a central element entitled *Rehearsing Reality*, which is specifically designed to adapt some of the main features from Forum Theatre to film language. Its aim is to activate viewers to interact with the film process. This thesis also explores the historical developments of the Theatre of the Oppressed with major emphasis on Forum Theatre and its practices amongst members of Brazil's Landless Movement living in camps and settlements in the hinterland of Sergipe State, North-East of Brazil.

The structure of the thesis is divided into five parts: Chapter One analyses the relevant literature on the subject; Chapter Two provides a reflective account of the filming period; Chapter Three offers an overview of Boal's life and the development of the Theatre of the Oppressed methods; Chapter Four briefly looks at the history and development of the Brazilian Landless Movement and provides a practical analysis of the experiences of

Theatre of the Oppressed amongst the Landless Movement and Chapter Five analyses the creative process of making the *docufragmentary Rehearsing Reality*. The Conclusion suggests that the social and political aspect of art can significantly contribute to the process of comprehension and transformation of the world.

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In the process of making *Rehearsing Reality* and writing this dissertation, I have constantly reflected about the experiences of the filming period in Brazil. The unstoppable force of images formed in my mind about a series of moments when the struggle for survival becomes proof of hopeful resistance in the face of adversity.

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Introduction: Towards an Open Platform

Augusto Boal (1931-), nominated for the 2008 Nobel Peace Prize, is a Brazilian Theatre Director, playwright, educator, activist and creator of the Theatre of the Oppressed, whose innovative theatrical methodologies created throughout the 1960's and 1970's continue to be developed and disseminated around the world.

Boal lives in Rio de Janeiro but spends most of his time traveling around the world teaching and taking part in a series of conferences about his Theatre of the Oppressed. During one of these journeys to England in February 2001, he spoke to a large audience at the Soho Theatre in London and shared some of his work experiences going back to late 1950's when he used to work at the Arena Theatre in São Paulo as a Theatre Director. At this period Boal transformed Arena's stage into a laboratory of theatrical experiments. Through a series of Drama Seminars, the Brazilian social reality began to be represented on stage. These seminars changed the Arena scenario involving leading actors on intense debates about 'politics, aesthetics and revolutionary ideology'. It was at this period that the aesthetic philosophy of the Theatre of the Oppressed began to take shape.

During the early sixties Brazil was beginning to enter a period shaped by the political and cultural situation as well as by a flourishing and innovative development process in the world of politics, cinema, theatre, popular music, literature, plastic arts and education. Amongst these developments the Popular Centres of Culture (CPC) stands out as one of the main cultural contribution of the time. The CPC's, spread to many parts of the country with the aim of disseminating art as a way to raise awareness about Brazil social problems.

Amongst many of the anecdotes told by Boal in Soho Theatre, he emphasized one of his most famous and most important encounters which took place during the early 1960s, when he was still a young theatre director supporting, like many other artists at the time, the revolutionary ideas spreading throughout South America, including the peasant struggle for agrarian reform in Brazil.

It was during one of his tours to the Northeast of Brazil in support of CPC, Boal and his cast presented a play to a group of landless peasants who were taking part in the land struggle movement. The emotional response to the play was immense due to its dramatic conclusion involving all of the actors carrying guns and singing revolutionary songs about the need to conquer land and shed blood for their struggle.

After the performance, a member of the audience, a peasant called Virgílio was so moved that he invited Boal and all the actors to bring their guns and flags and join the peasants in their next land occupation. At that moment Boal recognised that Virgílio could not differentiate between artists and activists and had to explain to him that the guns were merely props and the actors were not peasants (Boal 1995:2).

This unexpected reaction has led Boal to re-evaluate his understanding of theatre, to realise that it was delivering a message that he himself was not ready to carry out. This process of reflection became the catalyst for Boal's future work through exposing the need for a radical shift concerning the relationship between politics, theatre and its spectators.

Following this experience Boal explained that he had experimented with a variety of theatrical pieces in which audience members would participate to a much greater degree to that which had been seen before in conventional theatre.

Newspaper Theatre, Simultaneous Dramaturgy, Invisible Theatre, Image Theatre, and Forum Theatre were Boal's main theatrical techniques developed during the 1960s and 1970s. The Rainbow of Desire and the Aesthetics of the Oppressed are more recent examples of his work, however, all of these methods contain elements of the essential Theatre of the Oppressed system. Boal notes that each one of these techniques were invented out of necessity, more specifically a theatrical response to the political circumstances faced in different periods and moments of his life.

Immediately after recounting this story, Boal announced to the Soho Theatre audience the creation of a partnership between the Centre of the Theatre of the Oppressed in Rio de Janeiro and Brazil's most important social movement: the Brazilian Landless Movement

(MST), which for years had been organizing landless families to take part in massive land occupations to pressurise the Government into changing its policies towards land ownership in Brazil.

Boal further explained that the partnership revolved around an axis of teaching landless activists from all over the country to use Forum Theatre technique as a platform for debating issues that related to their personal and social problems. See *Rehearsing Reality* (sequence *Theatre of the Oppressed*).

Underpinning Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed is the claim that his methodology provides audience members the space and opportunities to interact at a meaningful level through open new channels of dialogue and further to this transfer these experiences into their lives. But can an examination of Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed and its relationship with the Landless Movement be constituted as an open interactive dialogue?

The opportunity of conducting a deeper assessment and examination of the Theatre of the Oppressed methodology based on experiences with the Landless Movement brought me to the development of this practice-based PhD. Some of my initial questions were specifically related to Boal's methods and the impact these theatrical experiments could generate amongst peasants. In addressing these questions it has been of paramount importance to ascertain the extent to which freedom of expression was exercised by the peasants in terms of the topics covered and the creation of the performances, and to what degree if any the Theatre of the Oppressed could be used as a propaganda tool for the movement's broader political activities?

Due to the complexities surrounding the documenting of the subject matter, specifically observing people learning and experimenting with a live theatrical method in a specific cultural context, it was clear that video would serve as the ideal medium.

The footage documenting these theatrical experiences has been an essential element to the process of development of this thesis. It is formed of a series of workshops, theatrical performances, interviews and aspects of the landless lives including some of their political

activities. The analysis and outcome of this work is an interactive *docufragmentary* called *Rehearsing Reality*. This video experiment both reflects Boal's Forum Theatre technique and embraces the findings of the thesis through challenging conventional boundaries of documentary language. It achieves this by means of its adoption of the interactive non-linear structure employed by Boal's Forum Theatre, in which interruptions and interactions constitute a central element in its methodology. Further to this, its discontinuous and unpredictable structure is based on both Walter Benjamin's theory of interruption and Umberto Eco's idea of *Open Work* in which disordered structures become a central principle.

Although the closest definition of *Rehearsing Reality* is the term interactive documentary, its disruptive nature and non-linear narrative approach require further clarification and a narrowing of the definition. After much reflection, the term *docufragmentary* seemed appropriate and accurate in capturing this form of fragmented documentary narrative¹

This thesis opens with an examination of related literature, revealing a situation in which nearly all former examinations of the Theatre of the Oppressed take the form of theoretical analyses and that only very few academic works on this topic incorporate visual/practice components. Perhaps the main reason for this scenario is that until now, film and video have not been widely recognized as 'means of investigation'.

A debate on the role of video documentaries as a research method leads to the analysis of the reflexivity concept. By reflecting on the most relevant stages of the filming process, the relationship between filmmaker and subject becomes explicit and questions about ethics and moral commitment are revealed.

This initial examination further clarifies that analysis and criticism of the Theatre of the Oppressed is currently in the hands of academics from Europe and the United States, who

¹*Docufragmentary*: This is the term I have created to describe a series of short sequences varying in content and time allowing for a very fragmentary development. In addition, it can be said that this video experiment throws meaning into suspension while elaborating an open form experience of the viewing act. The idea of a *docufragmentary* format represents the disintegration of outlines and invites a viewer to reflect and to create their own network of connections. While information is passed in a specific form, the elements received as documentary flashes are automatically reinterpreted by the viewer, creating an inclusive aspect turning her/him into an active participant of the work.

geographically narrow their focus of the Theatre of the Oppressed experiences taking place in and around themselves. This realisation suggests that other theatrical experiences taking place in countries like Brazil, India, Israel and Palestine amongst others, still deserve further academic work in order to contribute to the debate on Boal's methodology. This acknowledgment leads to the next section of the chapter that offers an overview of the historical developments of Brazil's Landless Movement and their decision to incorporate 'culture' within their main political agenda through prioritizing the formation of the landless cultural identity. It is within this context that the embryonic partnership exists between the Centre of the Theatre of the Oppressed and the Landless Movement. This partnership has been conceptualized to stimulate creativity and promote open-ended dialogue amongst individuals living in the MST camps and settlements. The final section of the first chapter on literature focuses on the emergence of the interactivity concept on films and the new experimental video formats.

Chapter Two reveals the main filming strategy and outlines the most significant moments of documenting both the social dynamic of the movement and its theatre productions. This chapter also unveils how the filming methodology addresses this author's concerns over questions of representation, ethics and moral commitment.

Chapter Three provides an overview of Boal's philosophical ideas and the theatrical developments which are fundamental in understanding the role and impact of the Theatre of the Oppressed. A close analysis of Boal's techniques focuses on Forum Theatre which represents the main method adopted by the peasants of the Landless Movement.

In order to clarify and contextualize the politics of the Landless Movement, Chapter Four briefly presents its historical development and the decision to incorporate culture and the arts into its political agenda as a way to consolidate the social, cultural and artistic transformation taking place within the landless communities.

In view of the fact that *Rehearsing Reality* is the main evidence base of this thesis, Chapter Five provides the theoretical aspect behind the development of this practical work and the

decision to adopt the interactive *Korsakow System* to weave the footage of *Rehearsing Reality* together in a non-linear yet comprehensible way.

The Conclusion to this thesis offers an evaluation of Boal's work amongst the Landless and looks into how art can be used as a medium through which people can bring about social change.

Before continuing to read this analysis, and as an opportunity to experience the evidence embodying the research findings, it would be most appropriate for the reader to begin by watching the *docufragmentary Rehearsing Reality*.

1. Literature Review

1.1 Filming Theatrical Realities

As will become evident from this chapter, there are many written works on Boal and the Theatre of the Oppressed, but very little attention is given to the inclusion of video recorded evidence as part of academic research, an analytical tool which could substantially contribute to the academic coverage of his work.

As revealed in the Theatre of the Oppressed online resource, there are currently more than fifty countries where Boal's practices are taking place, however, only a small representation of practitioners video record their theatrical experiences. Amongst them is Chen Alon, a member of an Israeli-Palestinian theatre group named Viewpoint who applies Boal's methodology as part of their theatre practice with youth audiences in order to debate questions related to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Alon video records all their theatrical practices as a way to document their work and also to use the videos as an educational material.² In Canada, David Diamond has followed a different approach: his innovation is Forum Theatre on television incorporating both live audiences and telephone interventions (Schutzman & Cohen Cruz, J. 1994).

In 2006, India played host to a major march of twelve thousand people aiming to create a Theatre of the Oppressed movement for this continent. Amongst them a group of practitioners and international supporters launched the Theatre of the Oppressed Movement³. To date, Boal's methodology has been practiced for sixteen years in India and the experiences with Forum Theatre have now spread to thirteen states of the country. Excluding the written academic work only two video documentaries about the theatrical experiences in India are available on the online International Theatre of the Oppressed Organization.⁴

During the International Theatre and Education Symposium⁵ more than one hundred Theatre of the Oppressed practitioners from all over the world were present. Although great emphasis was placed upon showing documentaries about Theatre of the Oppressed

² Author interview Barcelona [20 April 2007].

³ <http://www.theatreoftheoppressed.org/en/index.php?nodeID=33> Accessed: [15 March 2006].

⁴ <http://www.theatreoftheoppressed.org> Accessed: [15 March 2006].

⁵ <http://www.theatreoftheoppressed.org/uploads/IIIMeeting.pdf> [Barcelona, April 2007].

and other theatre based educational practices around the world, only four documentaries focused on Boal's work, amongst them, some sequences from *Rehearsing Reality*. The only speaker who has presented video images of his current work was Chen Alon from Israel.

In Brazil, the artist Geo Britto from the Centre of the Theatre of the Oppressed in Rio de Janeiro states: 'We have partnership with thirteen different groups in eleven Brazilian states, including the MST, prisons and shanty towns. For us it would be quite important to film all these experiences but lack of funding is what prevents us from doing it.'⁶

Recognition of the importance of recording images in the field of the Theatre of the Oppressed can be noted in projects like *Jokers of the World*,⁷ which is aimed at highlighting the role of the 'joker' in Forum Theatre. By June 2005 jokers from twelve countries were video documented and subsequently all these interviews were made available at the International Centre of the Theatre of the Oppressed.⁸

In his M.A. *Symbols and Power in the Theatre of the Oppressed*, Ronaldo Morelos developed a video component within his thesis, the documentary titled *Como Querem Beber Água: Augusto Boal and Theatre of the Oppressed in Rio de Janeiro* (Morelos: 1999). The video analyses the work of Boal when he was working as a *Vereador* (city councillor) of the city of Rio de Janeiro. Morelos chose to incorporate his documentary within his written work by producing a text transcript of the film as part of his thesis; however, aside from the transcription notes, Morelos decided not to make references to the development of the video documentation in his writing.

The lack of connection between visual material and academic research is a long-standing issue and a central topic relating to the practical element of this thesis. Therefore, a focus on the current debate of the role of video documentaries as an effective research tool is of paramount importance to the foundations of this thesis and its resulting practice component.

⁶ Email correspondence To Geo Britto/From Nina Simões [08 May 2005].

⁷ <http://www.theatreoftheoppressed.org/en/index.php?nodeID=180>

⁸ *Jokers of the World* is a project by Jeanne Dosse and Julian Boal <http://www.theatreoftheoppressed.org>

Currently most of the discussion on the role of documentaries in the academic world is being debated within the disciplines of Visual Anthropology, a sub-category of Anthropology and the Visual arts.⁹ To date, almost all academic work continues to be exclusively produced and presented by written words, a reality which contradicts academics such as Sarah Pink who states that ‘It is now recognized that film or video is not simply useful for representing ethnographic research but is a research method in itself’ (Pink 2004: 5). Filmmakers such as Paul Henley further clarify this contradiction by arguing that ‘the role of the visual has generally been merely to provide a small scrap of evidence on the basis of which an elaborate textual theorization can be mounted. Filmmaking itself, observational or otherwise, has not been widely adopted as a means of investigation’ (Henley 2004:111). Trinh. T. Minh-ha also emphasizes this topic by putting forward the notion that

One of the familiar arguments given by anthropologists to validate their prescriptively instrumental use of film and of people is to dismiss all works by filmmakers who are “not professional anthropologists” or “amateur ethnographers” under the pretext that they are not “anthropologically informed”, hence they have no theoretical significance from an anthropological point of view (Minh-ha 1991: 44-45).

The main criticisms aimed at video documentaries are related to questions of representation, ethics and moral commitment. One of the documentaries recognized as an influential piece within this context, which is still used to provoke debates on modes of representation is Robert J. Flaherty’s famous work *Nanook of the North* (1922). This documentary features the daily activities of the Hudson Bay Inuit Eskimo’s and their fight for survival. Flaherty’s decision to work in collaboration with his subjects by constantly directing them to the camera and also creating distorted images about ‘Nanook and his family’ have always generated questions regarding representation and ‘truth’ in documentary making.

⁹ In September 2003, the London Tate Modern Conference entitled *Fieldworks: Dialogues between Art and Anthropology* explored how artists and visual anthropologists can learn from each other. At the *Visual Evidence Seminar Series*, Goettinger, Germany 2000-01, it was suggested that visual researchers from different disciplines share some perspectives and that, in the future, visual research may develop as an *interdisciplinary* as well as *multidisciplinary* field, with greater collaboration between disciplines. (Pink 2006: 29). In April 2003, the author was also invited to show a rough cut of *Rehearsing Reality* to students of the Visual Anthropology MA course at Goldsmith College, London. After the presentation a debate took place focusing on questions regarding methodology and the role of the video production in academic research.

In the social sciences researchers have realized the benefits of adopting a reflexive approach towards the examination of their subjects Aull Davies (1999), Ruby (2000), Pink (2004). For Jay Ruby, to be reflexive, in terms of a work in anthropology, implies firstly to insist that anthropologists systematically and rigorously reveal their methods and themselves as the instrument of data generation. And secondly, it means to reflect upon how the medium through which they transmit their work predisposes readers/viewers to construct the meaning of the work in certain ways (Ruby 2000: 152). However, filmmaker Trinh T. Minh-ha suggests 'Reflexivity proves critically insignificant when it merely serves to refine and further the accumulation of knowledge' (Minh-ha 1991: 48). What Minh-ha tries to convey here is that reflexivity should always be a conscious and self-aware act.

For Charlotte Aull Davies, 'the most influential ethnographic film-maker in stimulating the development of the reflexive potential for filming was Jean Rouch.' (Aull Davies 1999:127). Rouch is well known for following some of Flaherty's practices of collaborating with subjects. He spent more than thirty years filming in West Africa and in most of his films his subjects actively participated on his productions.

Rouch's pivotal work is *Chronique d'un été* (Chronicle of a Summer 1960) made in collaboration with sociologist Edgar Morin, whose main proposition was that the final film should not be 'a fictional, nor a documentary, and not strictly speaking a sociological film. He proposed the film as a piece of research, an experiment lived by its authors and actors' (Mortimer 2004). The result of *Chronique d'un été* coined the term cinéma-vérité a term which can be said to have originated with Dziga Vertov's,

Kino Pravda (Cine-Truth) newsreel series 1922-1925. In *Chronique d'un été*, Rouch's main method of filming did not differ from his other productions in West Africa, where his camera was used as a 'catalyst' and 'accelerator' making people reveal themselves (Eaton 1979:14). *Chronique d'un été* explores the everyday life in Paris, and revolves around the question 'Are you happy?'.

Towards the end of the film there is a scene where the main protagonists of the story are watching some rough-cuts of the film and critically commenting on its results. This is followed by the concluding scene where both Rouch and Morin are reflecting on the words of their protagonists. This reflexive method reveals important questions related to filming techniques and approach, the relationship between filmmakers and subjects and 'truth' in documentaries.

A further reference of reflexive documentary is *The Ax Fight* (1975) by filmmaker Timothy Asch and the Anthropologist Napoleon Chagnon. The film explores the social life of the Yanomami in Venezuela through a single event, a fight amongst the villagers. Their main camera approach was observational and the structure of this documentary is composed of five parts, including unedited images and the filmmakers' voices describing what they are seeing.

Throughout the 1980s, other formats of reflexive documentaries were also launched. Chris Marker, the filmmaker, practitioner of Cinéma Vérite, master of montage and now New Media artist, has produced a series of personal film essays including the release of *Sans Soleil* (Sunless) in 1982. Mostly shot in Japan and Africa, *San Soleil* explores memory, time and history. The film starts with the voice of a woman reading letters she has received from a friend. While she reads it images of children playing appear. This is the beginning of a series of cross-cuts scenes spanning everyday life and fiction, revealing connections and perceptions about contemporary issues.

In *The Thin Blue Line* (1987) Errol Morris was able to collect substantial evidence to support his position, expose a corrupt court system and avoid the assassination of an innocent man. His method involved mixing and matching interviews and re-enactments, and incorporating an authorial presence as part of the film.

In *Roger and Me* (1989) Michael Moore focused on the plight of workers after the closure of a series of General Motor's factories in his hometown. Moore's juxtaposition of scenes and personal interviews can be seen as part of his methodology and although his topics deal with very important contemporary facts, he is often criticized for being manipulative

and for producing dubious alterations of reality. One of the main things concerning this film is the fact that Moore concentrates only on one person's view (himself) instead of allowing a multiplicity of voices to explore the complexity of the subject explored.

During the same period, on a more independent level, one of the key voices that emerged strongly critiquing modes of narration employed by documentaries was that of Trin T. Minh-ha. In *Naked Spaces: Living Is Round* (1985) she explored a new way of approaching narrative. She wrote a commentary read over the film by three different voices constituting 'three different ways of releasing information and of undermining the dominant documentary mode of informing.' (Minh-ha 1992: 215). The fact that Minh-ha has chosen to use, three voices which do not clash with each other, led some of her audience to criticise this as ambiguous. (Minh-ha 1992: 216).

Films which are created using a different format do require a special attention from the viewer who may sometimes be quite reluctant to appreciate a new film language. But for the majority of the audience, a new film format can also provide them the chance to analyse a specific subject from a different perspective.

All of these documentaries have succeeded in experimenting with different ways of questioning truth and representing reality to different degrees and without doubt documentaries can contribute to the debate of urgent and important matters currently going on in our world, but with the added combination of fast and cheap technology, a greater number of people are now able to use a camera to transform their thoughts, questions and visions into moving images, and distribute these through the internet.

This reality further increases concerns regarding ethics and moral commitment towards the subject being filmed, therefore it is quite important to stress the crucial role of the academic world on encouraging the production, debate and promotion of visual material by researchers.

1.2 Augusto Boal and The Theatre of the Oppressed: An Overview

Thirty-three years have passed since the launching of Augusto Boal's most influential polemical book *Theater of the Oppressed* (1974), where Boal presents a critical analysis of the history of Western theatre. In this book, Boal challenges the theories of Aristotle and what he describes as his very powerful 'poetic-political system of intimidation and coercion', which have since been incorporated in many different systems. For Boal the poetics of Aristotle are the poetics of oppression. Most particularly, with regards to the imposition of the specific values on the spectator in order to keep them passive. 'It creates empathy, which consists in an emotional compromise of the spectator, depriving him of the possibility of acting'. (Boal 2000:95).

He further analyses how the values of Machiavelli's poetics of 'virtù' were applied into Renaissance theatre as a way to continue to reproduce the forms of control of those in power. Then Boal moves from the sixteen century into the twenty century to explore Bertolt Brecht and his Marxist poetics, which are introduced as an opposite process to this tradition. The epic form questions passivity and introduces knowledge as a way to drive the spectator to think and to demand mental decisions.

Boal concludes his analysis by introducing the readers to a new type of theatre which counteracts with existent coercive systems in which spectators turn into what he calls 'spect-actors' eliminating the invisible space, or 'the fourth wall', that separates audiences from the stage. Boal's revolutionary theatre is presented as a truly participatory and interactive format which allows audience members to engage in an open ended dialogue aimed at finding new solutions for change.

Theatre of the Oppressed has already been translated into twenty-five languages and continues to be the central work through which Boal's philosophy and poetics are expressed.

Apart from the *Theatre of the Oppressed*, another very influential and more recent publication is *Games for Actors and Non-Actors*, (1992) in which Boal introduces his arsenal of games and exercises that constitute the Theatre of the Oppressed method. The

book also offers brief discussions on the concepts of Image Theatre, Invisible Theatre and Forum Theatre and offers a series of practical examples of these methods being applied in many different circumstances and cultures. For the purpose of this thesis, the last chapter of the book is certainly the most critical and relevant. In *Forum Theatre: Doubts and Certainties*, Boal suggests 'twenty fundamental topics' which contribute to the better understanding and practice of this technique.

The most sensitive of all these topics is the central figure of what Boal calls the 'Joker' considered as the main coordinator of a Forum Theatre performance. In an attempt to resolve some of the doubts around this figure Boal has published a set of rules, to be followed by all Jokers, described by him as 'almost obligatory'.¹⁰ The role of the Joker is discussed in greater depth in chapter Three.

In *Rainbow of Desire* (1995) Boal introduces the new stage of his work: the therapeutic ability of theatre to liberate individuals and change their lives.¹¹ His experiences in Europe while working in exile led him to discover that apart from politics, therapy is an important aspect of theatre. During this period he set out to work with introspective techniques in order to examine the fact that individualized situations could well be related to the social conditions. This experience has brought the Theatre of the Oppressed to be debated and compared to Psychodrama and Drama therapy and to a certain extent it has been criticized for being a more individualistic approach than more social experiments explored by Forum Theatre. In *Boal and the Shifting Sands: the Un-Political Master Swimmer*, David Davis and Carmel O'Sullivan (2000), argue that 'not only have Boal's methods been far from revolutionary for many years, they are now focused on individual needs, enabling the individual to survive a little longer within an oppressive social structure' (Davis and O'Sullivan 2000: 288-297).

The writer's argument that directly criticizes Boal's new approach seems not to recognize the therapeutic aspect of the Theatre of the Oppressed or the importance of the role of the individual in the process of change. As Boal points out: 'Where is the proletariat if the

¹⁰ See *Games For Actors and Non-Actors*, p. 232-234.

¹¹ Since *Rainbow of Desire*, amongst Boal's publications are: *Legislative Theatre* (1998), a book exploring Boal's experiences as a Legislator in Rio de Janeiro between 1993 to 1996 and his attempt to use theatre within Brazil's political system; and *The Aesthetics of the Oppressed* (2006), in which he explores new theories underpinning The Theatre of the Oppressed and questions related to aesthetics, art and the truth.

individual does not count?' (Schutzman: 1988). Perhaps both writers should consider the analyses of Theatre of the Oppressed experiences, especially Forum Theatre, taking place in cultures far away from the comfortable academic circles of Europe and the United States of America. As Jane Plastow's comments: 'Academic study of theatre has too often perhaps been dominated by a literary approach which views the text in isolation from the conditions of its creation and performances' (Boon and Plastow 1998:3).

Apart from Boal's own writing, almost all literature related to the Theatre of the Oppressed has been written by academics and practitioners *committed* to the Theatre of the Oppressed in the form of books, articles, essays and written theses.

A significant body of this work is available on the Internet and further works can be accessed at The International Centre of the Theatre of the Oppressed¹² online resource, created in 2004 to facilitate communication and stimulate dialogue amongst practitioners from different parts of the world.

Amongst Theatre of The Oppressed practitioners there is a consensus that Boal's methods immerse people into a dialogical debate exploring political, social and individual problems in order to identify, clarify and possibly reverse their oppressive circumstances. However, regarding the possible effects it provokes on people outside the theatre, the debate becomes much more complex. As Frances Babbage suggests:

In order to judge the 'success' of a Forum, it might be necessary to take account of the number of people who had the opportunity to witness it; the proportion who offered physical interventions in the action, or who joined in verbally; and who if any, learned something from the experience, or modified their behaviour after the Forum as a result? (Babbage 2004:33). But she immediately emphasizes that even with this sort of assessment it would be difficult to determine if Forum Theatre really works. In her view 'it is more productive to ask in what circumstances, under what conditions, the techniques work best' (Babbage 2004:33).

American writers, educators and Theatre of the Oppressed practitioners, Mady Schutzman & Jan Cohen-Cruz, have been formulating perhaps the most pertinent questions regarding

¹² <http://www.theatreoftheoppressed.org> Accessed: [12-02-05]

Boal's methodology. In *Playing Boal - Theatre, Therapy, Activism* (1994), they edited a series of essays featuring case studies that explored the efficacy of Boal's work in Europe and North America.

In *A Boal Companion - Dialogues on theatre and cultural politics* (2006) both writers have again edited another collection of work which expands the analysis of Boal's TO, to other major areas outside the theatre, making visible Boal's project to a multiplicity of fields including social psychology, ethics, biology, comedy, trauma studies, and political science. In the chapter *Tactical Carnival – Social Movements*, demonstrations, and dialogical performance, author L.M. Bogad reminds us of the 'long history of theatre at the service of social movements'. He emphasize how the 'Theatre of the Oppressed expands the role of rehearsal to help people at any level of political commitment not only to rehearse direct confrontation with the state but to use improvisatory performance to decide what their problems are, what they want, and what they are able to do about it.' Another Bogad exploration which can be related to the Landless Movement and its experiences with the Theatre of the Oppressed is regarding his observation on how some demonstrations organized by social movements, involves a 'mass of spectators listening to a few elevated and amplified leaders. The clear division between speakers on a podium and the audience stands in sharp contrast to TO concepts of dialogism and spect-actorship' (Bogad, L.M. 2006: 52).

Although the Theatre of the Oppressed methods have been disseminated to many parts of the world and applied in many different fields, it is important to note that amongst all Boal's theatrical methods Forum Theatre (adopted by the Landless Movement) is the most common and widely used form.

In short, during a Forum Theatre session there is a scene in which the main protagonist (oppressed) tries to overcome an oppression considered important to that specific audience. At the end of the session, the joker invites spectators to interact with the stage and replace the main protagonist to rehearse their ideas and what they consider to be the best solution to that problem.

But when examining Forum Theatre or any other of Boal's methods, it is important to bear in mind that critical investigations on the methods reflect particular experiences carried out in a specific cultural context. There are around the world many practitioners who are experimenting with variations on Boal's methods, therefore the experiences and the level of effectiveness will always diverge. The practice always provokes participants to question and to act, therefore the best way to evaluate it is by observation. Based on this principle, *Rehearsing Reality* has been created as a way to contribute to further analyses on Boal's methodology.

1.3 The Landless Movement (MST)

The MST is a social movement involving a network of people who are engaged in a series of collective actions aimed to pressure the Brazilian government to change their policies towards agrarian issues in Brazil. Since its creation in 1984, the MST has been developing a series of strategies to improve the lives of people living in thousands of camps and settlements around the entire country.¹³ Since late 1990s the MST began to discuss culture and since then a series of artistic experiences began to take place amongst their communities, including their work with Augusto Boal.

As the partnership between the MST¹⁴ and the Centre of the Theatre of the Oppressed is a relatively new field, no published literature is yet available about this topic apart from few internal reports produced by the MST theatre practitioners, and some interviews published online.¹⁵

In order to understand the work and projects undertaken by the MST and the strategies applied to enable more than two million¹⁶ impoverished people to seek for land and

¹³ Once the landless have won the right to the land, they establish a permanent community: their *acampamento*, or camp, becomes an *assentamento*, or settlement. Branford and Rocha 2002.

¹⁴ The Landless Movement or Brazil's Movement of Landless Rural Workers is always referred to as the MST (Movimento Sem Terra).

¹⁵ Amaral, E. (2005) *Rico não gosta que pobre pense*. Available: <www.piratininga.org.br/artigos/2005/70/elianeamaral-mineirinhomst.html> Accessed: [08-09-2005] Villas Bôas, R. (2006) *Sem Terra Identificam sua Luta em experiências teatrais do MST*. Available: <<http://www.mst.org.br/mst/pagina.php?cd=1500>> Accessed: [12-08-2006]

¹⁶ The movement has 5,000 settlements that occupy slightly more than 22 million hectares [55 million acres], on which two million people live. Also, there are more than 150,000 landless workers camped in plastic huts along highways, struggling to obtain land. At the 1,500 settlement schools the men and women teachers came mostly out of the movement and teach based on a "pedagogy of the land" which, in broad terms, could be defined as Paulo Freire's popular education adapted to settlement reality.

dignity, it is vital to contextualize the historical, social and cultural developments of this social movement.

Most of these developments have been followed by a series of writers including Branford & Rocha (2002), Carter (2003), Fernandes (2000), Martins (1990), (1994), (2000), (2003), Wilder (2001), Navarro (1996), Petras & Veltmeyer (2001), Wright & Wolford (2003).

The writer and political analyst Noam Chomsky frequently highlights the importance of the MST in his critical debates on Latin American politics. During his participation at the Second World Social Forum in Porto Alegre Brazil, 2002, he visited an MST settlement. His commitment and interest in the social movement was highlighted in a personal interview for this thesis, in which he called the MST the most important social movement in the world (see *Rehearsing Reality* sequence *Empowerment*).

Bernardo Mançano Fernandes points to the fact that during the first years of struggle, when the landless were still in a period of formation, the main priority of the movements' leadership was the survival of people living in MST camps and the expansion of land occupations throughout the country (Mançano 2000:96). During this early stage, other topics including gender and culture were not yet considered a priority therefore they were left to be debated at a later stage.

The internal debates and the implementation of the cultural politics in the MST main agenda is discussed in great detail by Malcolm Kenneth McNee in his PhD thesis: *The Arts in Movement: Cultural Politics and Production in Brazil's Landless Rural Workers Movement - MST* (2003). For him 'the cultural politics of the MST's Culture Collective, in particular their diagnostic dimension, rearticulate many rhetorical aspects of the revolutionary romanticisms that span the 1920s to the 1960s, when the so-called ideology of Brazilian Culture and its twin pillars, the National and the Popular, achieved an almost uncontested hegemony in the fields of cultural and intellectual production.' His work discloses the movement's main strategies to form a culture of the landless and to initiate a

These figures have been published during the 5th Congress of Brazil's Landless Movement in mid-June 2007 in Brasilia. <<http://www.mstbrazil.org/?q=raulzibechionmst5thnationalcongress>> Accessed: [27-08-2007].

project of ‘cultural revolution’ amongst the MST camps and settlements. Another aspect that his thesis, also analyses is the vast amount of cultural and artistic productions created by the landless in their camps and settlements located in many parts of the country.

Much of the cultural work already produced by the movement, can also be accessed in a project created by Else Vieira on the website *The Sights and Voices of Dispossession: The Fight for the Land and the Emerging Culture of the MST*.¹⁷

On the subject of theatrical experiences, McNee reveals some isolated experiences taking place in some specific camps and settlements organized by a series of independent theatre directors. He points to the emergence of a national theatrical project aimed at encouraging ‘dialogue and cultural expression’ amongst the landless, in which Augusto Boal and his Theatre of the Oppressed would play an essential role.

As this project was envisioned to take place in many parts of the country McNee’s main suggestion was that “the formation and performance of the Theatre of the Oppressed should be analysed within the landless communities.” This recommendation is certainly very important but considering the geographical dimensions of the country, a great amount of time and finance would have to be allocated in order to develop such research. Therefore, in this thesis, the examination of Boal’s theatrical practices takes place in a specific but representative area of Brazil’s Northeast, the *Sertão* (hinterland) of Sergipe State, most well known for its high level of poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, drought and hunger. Within this context, the author has focused the camera on a series of workshops, rehearsals and Forum Theatre presentations taking place in the local MST camps and settlements.

¹⁷ <http://www.landless-voices.org> Accessed: [03-02-2003].

1.4 Interrupting The System

Since the 1980s, 'interactivity' has become one of the most debated and explored topics in the world of computers and theatre has been a great source for some of the new theories and current practices.

As Brenda Laurel writes in her *Computers as Theatre* 'Who better understands human interaction than the dramatist?' (Laurel 1991: xi). In her book, Laurel presents her *Poetics* of human-computer activity by employing 'an analysis of the nature and uses of human-computer activity to extend and modify the theory of literature representations presented in Aristotle's *Poetics*' (Laurel 1991: xix). But Frasca's (2004)¹⁸ critical comments on Laurel's work and on the fact that her ideas are 'heavily influenced by Aristotle's *Poetics*' lead us to Boal's critique of Aristotle and his Coercive System of Tragedy. For Boal, the Aristotelian system 'is designed to bridle the individual, to adjust him to what pre-exists. If this is what we want, says Boal, the Aristotelian system serves the purpose better; if, on the contrary, we want to stimulate the spectator to transform his society, to engage in revolutionary action, in that case we will have to seek another poetics!' (Boal 1979: 47).

The theatrical methodology and the principle of interactivity of Boal and his Theatre of the Oppressed have been influencing a series of scientists and artists to explore new ways to diminish the barrier between spectators and screen Manovich (2001), Frasca, (2001), Carvalho (2004). For Manovich

[...] the theory of cinema is more directly relevant to new media than, say, literary theory, because, as new media, cinema is a cultural form heavily based on technology; and the evolution of film language is closely linked to the technological developments and changes in cinema's industrial mode of production.¹⁹

He points to the fact that 'The shift to the database can be understood as part of the larger shift from a traditional "information-poor" society to our own "information-rich" society.'

For him,

Database can be thought of as a new cultural form in a society where a subject deals with huge amounts of information, which constantly keep changing. It may be

¹⁸ Frasca G. (2004) Available: <<http://www.electronicbookreview.com/thread:firstperson/Boalian>>

¹⁹ See <<http://www.nettime.org/Lists-Archives/nettime-l-0110/msg00100.html>>

impossible to tie all together in a single (or a set of) narrative(s) but you can put it in a database and use a search engine to find what you are looking for, to find information which you are not aware of but which matches your interests and finally to even discover new categories. In short, a narrative is replaced by a directory/index.²⁰

One of the examples of a programme based on a database system is the Korsakow System created by the artist Florian Thalhofer in 2000 (See Chapter Five). Manovich has suggested that the Korsakow system 'may be the first database cinema project, which works online.'²¹

In the Korsakow system, an author can decide on how the scenes relate to each other, it is a system devoid of any static, fixed order. It is a generative system whereby the order of the scenes is calculated while the viewer looks at any Korsakow based project. Systems like Korsakow can not only offer new ways to present visual data but also further encourage researchers, producers and directors to experiment with new ways to involve audience members in the visual experience.

In the case of *Rehearsing Reality*, Korsakow proved to be limited, but at the same time it has allowed Forum Theatre language to be adapted to the film medium, by allowing the construction of a non-linear narrative (see Chapter Five).

²⁰ See < <http://www.nettime.org/Lists-Archives/nettime-l-0110/msg00100.html> >

²¹ Schillinger, J. (2003) Streaming <<http://www.mediamatic.net/article-290-en.html>>

2. Filming Theatrical Realities



1. Fazenda Lomba Land Occupation. Sergipe State - May 2003

The image above taken from *Rehearsing Reality*, is included here because it encapsulates a moment showing the main and most strategic action organized by the MST: a land occupation. This direct action symbolizes the main cause of the landless and also demarcates a possible new stage in their lives, a stage where they can turn from being the spectators to the protagonists of their own reality.²² As this thesis explores how the landless are using the Theatre of the Oppressed methods to rehearse their reality, it is important to focus the lens not only on the actions taking place in the realm of the theatre, but also on the reality of the landless.

²² This land occupation was the last filming experience I had while with the landless in Sergipe in May 2003. To be invited by the MST state representative to film it, for me, symbolically represented the trust gained through the research I had previously conducted there.

The main interest in using video as a medium for research and for the presentation of the research is directly related to my concern with representation and also to the belief that visual images can represent cultural differences, social practices and can further produce critical questioning through its viewing. The work of Boal is connected to these three elements. His methodology allows important and sometimes unknown stories to emerge. The freedom each 'spect-actor'²³ experiences whilst practicing Forum Theatre allows them to expose particular elements of their own cultural reality and social practices. It also transforms the stage into a laboratory of experiments. The stage becomes a place where the audience can uncover hidden structures of power and oppression in order to challenge them. The dialogical experience, which can only be a real one, symbolizes a desire for change. The level of impact of these experiences on each person differs greatly, depending on each character, each situation and each environment.

The act of focusing a video camera on these theatrical experiences adds a new layer to this sort of performance. It can offer a much greater number of people not only examples of the sort of democracy we are living in but also reflect on the immoral attitude of oppressors towards the oppressed. Further to this, it can provide the opportunity to learn about a new theatrical language and ultimately about how art can help us to see and understand the world we live in.

2.1. Representation

Capturing images that can reveal the subject in its specific environment is both a responsible and a challenging act. Chapter One discussed some key filmmakers whose works have contributed towards the debate around reality and representation. Amongst them, the ethnographer and filmmaker Jean Rouch (1917-2004) stands out for producing a series of films dealing with these topics as well as for being 'at the vanguard of reflexive anthropology'. Although Rouch has not written much about his methods, his productions became a great source of inspiration to many of the filmmakers involved in the French New Wave cinema particularly Jean-Luc Godard and François Truffaut (Stoller, P.1992:2).

²³ The concept of the 'spect-actor' is discussed further in Chapter Three.

During the 1980s, Trinh T. Minh-ha emerged as a critical voice towards conventional films and documentaries and their mode of representation. Her perspective entirely differs from Rouch's approach. Although she follows the route of observation Minh-ha does not use the camera in order to provoke actions in the field. Her film work and writings reveal a strong focus on the relationship between filmmakers, subjects, viewers and truth. She claims that 'to raise the question of representing the Other is... to reopen endlessly the fundamental issue of science and art; documentary and fiction; universal and personal; objectivity and subjectivity; masculine and feminine; outsider and insider' (Minh-ha 1991: 65). Minh-ha's works have not only reopened the debate of observational films but have brought to the attention of the viewer and reader fundamental questions concerning the areas of representation, anthropology and art. Minh-ha emphasizes that issues concerning 'the other' are not only the concern of the anthropological world, but a topic very much debated amongst artists and filmmakers, who have always been committed to the struggle of marginalized peoples. As she states,

The issues of representation...do not just pertain to ethnographic and documentary filmmaking. What I bring into question in connection with anthropology obviously does not just concern anthropology, but the whole of the human and social sciences....All the questions broached in my films have a much wider scope than the frames they are often confined to, although they remain specific and context-bound in their materializations (Minh-ha 1992:162).

Many film professionals who are used to working with a marginalized sector of society will face the question of representation. To frame a shot implies an ethic which reveals the responsibility of each filmmaker towards its subject and its viewers. 'Which truth does one want to offer to the viewer?' (Minh-ha 1992:145).

In order to represent others, one needs to have in mind the question of integrity. It is not only enough to belong to the same culture or to speak the same language of the people you are working with, what is important is that the filmmaker understands enough about *what* they are going to say and carefully consider *how* they are going to say it.

For example, the necessary condition of spending time with the landless, not only as a researcher and filmmaker, but also as someone who shows respect and interest in their

lives and culture, allowed me to observe the complexity of their lives and the ways in which those lives intersect with questions of poverty, class, identity, culture, oppression and power.

This connection to their social world resulted in a relationship of trust, which inevitably was quite liberating for the research subject. Although initially some of the landless seemed to be quite shy in front of the camera, there was a clear overriding receptivity to the project and its objectives and this eliminated any resistance to the filming process. As one author puts it: 'Most viewers sense the filmmaker's attitude toward their subjects – be it contempt or respect, compassion or cynicism, arrogance or humility' (Barbash & Taylor 1997: 50).

Before researchers, artists, and filmmakers enter into any discipline of humanities, they should first turn to themselves and ask: What is the purpose of our work? How should people be represented? How will it affect them? How will it contribute to their situation? What will be the nature of the relationship between the subject and the audience? Only then, when these basic questions are answered should work commence (Barbash & Taylor 1997:34-89).



2. The author filming a Forum Theatre rehearsal - April 2003

2.2 Methodology

Prior to the filming²⁴ period, some important decisions were taken. This author became the main camera operator and sound recordist²⁵ for most of the filmmaking period. The main shooting was always conducted in an observational manner using a handheld digital camera and only relying on a tripod for key occasions. As backgrounds always reveal quite a lot about interviewees, all of them were filmed in the actual environment in which each person lived or worked.

While in the field, the main focus was always on documenting and not on how to construct an interactive documentary. This was a topic left for post-production. Whilst filming Forum Theatre performances, the camera has specifically and purposefully focused on the Joker figure, the audience interactions, and debates as a way to illustrate how this theatrical method works. The fact that the end product would become an interactive documentary did not affect the filming technique.

The research period in Brazil began in November 2001, initially with an encounter with a representative of the Centre of the Theatre of the Oppressed in Rio de Janeiro, followed by a second meeting with a representative of the Landless Movement's main office in São Paulo. These initial meetings were important to establish a formal relationship with both organizations and further explain the nature of this thesis.²⁶ On both occasions, the two representatives were interviewed to provide a contextualization about the partnership between the Centre of the Theatre of the Oppressed and the Landless Movement.

They described their partnership as a series of workshops directed by Boal and other dramatists from the Centre of the Theatre of the Oppressed to initially train nineteen MST activists from all over the country on Boal's methodology. The main objective was that participants would then return to their regions and form theatre groups in their MST camps and settlements. As theatre practices began to expand, the land activists taking part on Boal's workshops formed the Patativa do Assaré National Brigade of the Theatre of the

²⁴ My work was based on the assumption that 'research and filming are not separated stages.' Barbash & Taylor (1997:70).

²⁵ During the filming in Sergipe, in two specific occasions I was joined for a short period by a sound assistant, Oscar Salgado, and a second camera operator, Jessy Sklair.

²⁶ Before initiating this research, in November 2001, both groups, the MST and the Theatre of the Oppressed, have agreed to cooperate with the research.

Oppressed. This group was mainly created to exchange information about the theatre experiences taking place around the country.



3. Patativa do Assaré - Rio de Janeiro - November 2002

One of the ways suggested by the interviewees to further sharpen the research focus was to travel to Porto Alegre, in the south of the country, and attend the second World Social Forum (WSF) in February 2002. During this event a series of MST theatre groups formed by *Patativa do Assaré* would be for the first time performing a series of plays using Boal's Methodology.



4. Patativa do Assaré - II World Social Forum - February 2002

As seen in *Rehearsing Reality*, the Forum Theatre offers a very different theatrical act. Its structure is vastly different to more traditional, orderly and inflexible theatrical rules. The spectator turns into spect-actor by assuming a participatory role - they reflect, debate and take part in active interventions. Without people participating there is no forum.

During all these Forum Theatre performances the main filming approach was observational (Macdonald & Cousins 1998: 97-102). In addition, while at the WSF, some members of the *Patativa do Assaré* were also interviewed about the development of the Theatre of the Oppressed experiences amongst the MST in other parts of the country.²⁷

Their response revealed that quite often cultural activists who are also landless activists had to change their 'cultural' agenda in order to support urgent activities organized by the movement. Sometimes this circumstance restricted cultural and artistic development.²⁸

Based on this, it seemed impractical to research the theatrical experiments in more than one region of the country as previously planned.²⁹ The geographical distance between each state would make it impossible to conduct research within the time scale and budget available.

The decision as to which region to focus this research on was clarified two months later, during the First MST Culture Week taking place at the State University of Rio de Janeiro (UERJ) between 18 to 24 of March 2002. Further interviews with MST cultural activists revealed that one of the regions where these activities were periodically taking place was in Sergipe State, more specifically, in the state's hinterland.

The first filming period in Sergipe state began at the Quissamã settlement in July 2003 and lasted for fifteen days. Quissamã is a quite important settlement in the region as it holds a school for adult education and political formation, specifically designed for the landless from Sergipe State. These courses normally last a month. During the same year, the

²⁷ In early 2002, the main Theatre of the Oppressed experiences were taking place in São Paulo, Brasília, Sergipe, Espírito Santo and Ceará.

²⁸ This situation is quite similar to the CPC's in the 1960's when the main priority concerned activism instead of culture.

²⁹ When this work was first conceived the initial proposal was to observe and film three Landless Movement communities in different states of Brazil. At the time, my main intention was to compare two communities actively working with the Theatre of the Oppressed methods with one that did not have any contacts with this theatrical form.

cultural and educational MST sectors had adopted the Theatre of the Oppressed workshops as part of their formation classes. For a week (three hours a day) different groups had the opportunity to learn and experiment with Boal's methods. Participants were predominantly men between the ages of eighteen and fifty.



5. Theatre of the Oppressed workshop. Sergipe State - September 2002

This gender imbalance represents the extent to which the MST still needs to work on topics regarding gender. In particular, the local culture within the Northeast of Brazil predominantly remains under the influence of a male dominated environment, denying women the chance to participate or involve themselves in collective cultural events. This reality is also reflected within the MST which also suffers from the pressure of a 'machismo' culture.

Within the situation described above, each workshop stage was filmed. The Theatre of the Oppressed workshops are always quite intense with all participants involved in a series of physical exercises. In order to provide a more intimate relationship with the audience, the use of a handheld camera was deemed the most appropriate strategy. In this way the camera movement covered all the angles necessary for the editing phase, i.e., long shot, medium, two-shots, close-ups.

All of the landless taking part in these courses came from a series of local MST camps and settlements, and some of them have continued to develop the practice with members of their communities when they returned to their settlements. This was revealed during subsequent visits to the hinterland³⁰ of the state³¹, including the settlements Jacaré Curitiba and Queimada Grande and camps Betinho and Quixabeira.

The second and last period of research in Sergipe lasted for three months, March to May 2003. With an intense concentration of poor landless families in the hinterland, this region became an experimental area for this cultural project. During this stage the camera focused on how all these workshops were organized and to see if the phenomenon of ‘multiplication’ of the Theatre of the Oppressed was taking place.³²

The first few days in the hinterland region were used as a period of familiarization with the local MST environment, filming some of their activities and also screening the rushes from the previous filming visit to some of the MST participants on the Theatre of the Oppressed workshops. Regular visits were made to the local MST office, a simple house with a few tables and a computer.

Around twenty landless, sometimes more, arrived daily in the MST offices in order to obtain information about how they can join the movement. Following their initial visit, families are invited to take part in a series of meetings in order to discuss the principles and practices of the movement. From this moment onwards, they are introduced to another way of thinking. From a ‘culture of silence’ and oppression families will now be expected to participate in an entirely new context.

The outcomes of this initial participation in the MST environment always led to families being invited to build and form a temporary MST camp. On this particular occasion, around three hundred families were expected to take part in this action. Another day of

³⁰During the period of 2002/2003 there were around six thousand people living in MST camps and settlements on the hinterland area.

³¹During the period mentioned in the previous note, Lupércio Damaceno was the MST cultural activist coordinating the experiences of the Theatre of the Oppressed in Sergipe state. He had attended two Theatre of the Oppressed workshops led by Boal in Rio de Janeiro.

³²The dissemination of the Theatre of the Oppressed to many parts of the world is based on the idea of multiplying Boal’s methods, therefore the camera’s main focus was to see if this phenomenon was also occurring during that period.

intense filming took place, starting with a journey with the landless to the specific location where the camp would be set up, followed by the arrival of the landless and the setting up of the camp. Some of these filming experiences have been added to *Rehearsing Reality*, in order to illustrate the life and actions of the landless.

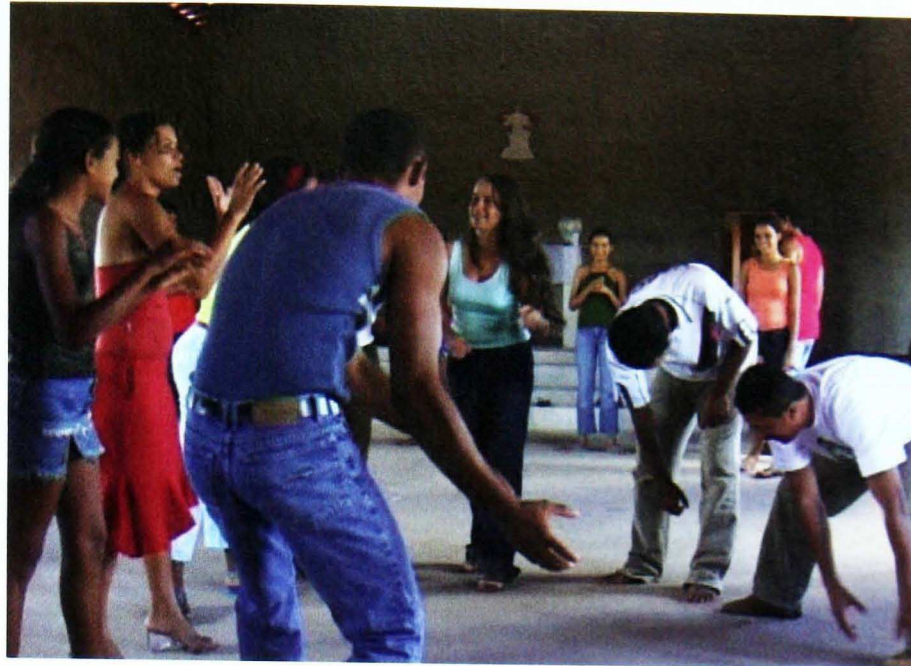
2.2.1 Theatre of the Oppressed Within the Landless

The Theatre of the Oppressed workshops took place in two of the most important MST settlements in the region. Jacaré Curitiba and Queimada Grande are the result of the MST land struggle during the 1980s and 1990s. The creation and coordination of both settlements involved each family participating on the building of their houses, a school and a catholic church.



6. Settlement Jacaré Curitiba. Sergipe State - September 2002

The Theatre of the Oppressed workshop took place almost every day over a two week period. In all these workshops the session would start with games and exercises, combined with rehearsals of short Forum Theatre scenes. During these sessions the handheld camera approach afforded the opportunity to film some of the most important moments of the workshops activities.



7. Theatre of the Oppressed workshop. Sergipe State - September 2002

Considering that the participants intended to perform Forum Theatre plays to the local MST camps and settlements, the decision was taken to create two plays about topics portraying the lives of the landless of that region.

As violent evictions are a very common practice against the MST camps, and taking into account that during this period approximately three hundred families from a local MST camp had been threatened with eviction by the local police, the participants agreed to create a play where this situation could be rehearsed. A further thread running through the context of this decision related to the memory of the Eldorado dos Carajás massacre (see Chapter Four) further reinforced the importance of this topic to the people.

Amongst the suggestions for subject areas, there was also the idea of creating a play about the Catholic religious power inside the MST communities. This suggestion was supported by their experiences with the majority of the Catholic priests doing service in the local landless settlements, where they were found to be markedly different from the open minded and radical priests working under the theology of liberation from the early 1960s.

While debates about religious power were taking place amongst the participants of the TO workshop, a conflicting situation emerged with the local priest. The result of having the TO workshops inside of both settlement churches, because they were the best and only

locations, resulted in the decision taken by the local priest to lock the church in the Alto Bonito settlement. As he told the landless: 'The house of Christ is not a theatre!' Eventually one of the participants managed to talk to the priest and get hold of the key so that the group could continue their work.

Although it was clear that between the local priest and the landless a dialogical relationship was lacking, the idea of bringing religion into the discussions not only infuriated some of the participants of the workshop but also created a difficult climate in which to continue the discussions. The reaction against criticizing the power of Catholic religion was taken very personally by some of the more devout peasants and it nearly resulted in the participant group fragmenting.

After a further debate on this topic the main consensus was that two plays would be created and that the stories would somehow interconnect with each other. The resulting pieces are the plays *The Eviction* and *The Promise* presented in *Rehearsing Reality*.

This initial workshop was formed from twenty-two people, although this number would fluctuate from day to day. Amongst them there was a wide range of different gender and ages encompassing 15 to 40 year olds.

During the Theatre of the Oppressed workshops, the main role of the camera was to document the debates, games and exercises practiced with Boal's theatrical methods. Whenever possible, the camera shared the same seating space with all participants and filmed their discussions at eye level, but also from time to time the camera would be moving around and focusing on specific people to capture the different examples of participation.

As the theatre workshops were taking place in churches located inside the MST settlements, it became a routine to be invited by some of the settlers to visit and share time with them. Those social moments helped to build trust and to form a relaxed relationship between the camera and its subjects. It also facilitated a series of interviews that have been carried out throughout the filming period. Most of these interviews with local residents set

out to identify the main differences between their lives before and after living in a MST settlement. In all of these interviews the camera captured stories related to oppression, violence, hunger and racism.

While almost all the Theatre of the Oppressed workshops were held within MST settlements one such experience took place in an MST camp. Under one of the family tents made out of black polythene, participants of the Theatre of the Oppressed workshops met and wrote the scripts for both plays. As some participants had already experienced evictions from MST camps, they involved the entire group in a creative collective process involving discussions on law, human rights and the MST internal politics.

2.3 *The Eviction* and *The Promise*

As the plays were presented outside from the afternoon to evening the camera had to adapt to extreme light conditions - from a very bright exposure it also captured the dark of their camp. No artificial lights were used at any point during the period of filming in order not to interfere in the peoples' environment.

In order to film the plays *The Eviction* and *The Promise*, two hand held cameras were used. During the presentation of the plays, camera one was focused on the actual theatrical scene and camera two focused on the audience and their reactions towards the play. During the second stage of the play, when physical interaction takes place, camera one was focused on the Joker and camera two focused on the audience and their interaction.

There were moments in these Forum Theatre presentations when reality and fiction seemed to merge. During one such scene from *The Eviction*, most of the audience spontaneously followed the actors as if they were also taking part in the scene in which a land occupation takes place. In another presentation of the same play in a different location, the audience reacted quite strongly against the actor representing the policeman and as a result the forum had to stop. The participation, interaction and combination of realism and activism amongst the landless, suggests that this sort of artistic practice can aid the MST activists in the discussion of their topics in a challenging and innovative format.

2.4 Conclusion

This chapter has offered an overview of the filming period. The idea of offering people access to an artistic methodology enabled them not only to reflect on their own reality but also has offered them the possibility to become involved in cultural interaction. For the great majority of landless, the Theatre of the Oppressed was the first artistic format to offer the possibility to talk, to express their ideas and to participate in debates about subjects they had not previously addressed. Interactive participative art offered them a way to see and to critically think about the world in which they live, and by thinking about it, to spur them on to change it.

The most significant difference between the camera and the Forum Theatre audience is that the audiences were free to choose which actions taking place on the aesthetic scenario to look at. In the context of this work, the camera has captured what this author felt was the most representative factors of reality.

3. Augusto Boal and The Theatre of the Oppressed: An Overview

‘Theatre is a form of knowledge; it should and can also be a means of transforming society. Theatre can help us build our future, rather than just waiting for it’ (Boal 1992: xxxi).

In the lines above, Augusto Boal affirms his belief that theatre not only represents but also influences and stimulates new ways of thinking and acting in our reality. That is one of the central arguments behind his methods and one of the main aspects explored in this thesis.

Since the early days of the Theatre of the Oppressed, every single technique has been created as part of a continuous search for new forms of dialogue, theatrical methods which can increase our levels of perception and also encourage us to think critically in order to debate conflicting and complex ideas – for Boal this is what stimulates, arouses, enriches, prepares the spectator for action in real life (Boal 1992: 231).

Although most of the time members of society believe they are engaged in dialogue with others, upon closer examination, it frequently takes the form of a monologue. For Boal, when this happens, oppression ensues. In this way the work of Boal is valuable because it creates opportunities for reconsidering how one can act in real life.

The dissemination of Boal’s methods all over the world is predominantly based on the principles of critical thinking, participation, interaction and dialogue. Political activists, students, educators, therapists, social workers and others have adapted Boal’s methods in a series of different situations (Schutzman & Cohen-Cruz 1994: 6-8). But what exactly is the Theatre of the Oppressed and how can it really provoke changes in real life when these are connected to so many complex factors? And if it can, how can one measure the efficiency of Boal’s methods?.

3.1 Boal’s Theory of Theatre

In his book *Theatre of the Oppressed*, Boal introduces his ‘Poetics of the Oppressed’ after providing a lengthy and critical examination of the development of Western theatre from Classical Greece to these days. Boal’s main attempt is to prove how theatre is a weapon and how it can be used for deactivation or liberation of the spectator.

Boal's main anecdote about the origin of theatre describes it as: 'people singing freely in the open air; the theatrical performance was created by and for the people.' For him, that freedom was lost when the aristocracy decided to adopt divisions:

Some individuals should stay in the stage and only they should be able to act; the others should remain seated and passive – 'Later another division was created: some individuals became protagonists (aristocrats) and some others became a passive chorus symbolizing, in one way or another, the masses (Boal 1979: Foreword).

Boal refers to these changes as Aristotle's poetic-political system of intimidation and coercion because it maintains the audience passive by emphasizing catharsis and actions based on imitation. As Boal stated in *Rehearsing Reality*:

Aristotle used the word catharsis also to describe the experience that the spectator has when they see the tragic hero doing something which is against the law, against the Gods, against the established ethos of the society, and the protagonist suffers a catastrophe. The protagonist is killed or commits suicide...this is a catastrophe – and for the spectator who has done vicariously the same crime or the same transgression, instead of catastrophe there is the catharsis – he wants to defy God he did it during the play through the protagonist, but now he is no longer willing to do the same because he is afraid of the catastrophe.

For Boal, this sort of catharsis only prevents the spectator from engaging with the performance. For him, the spectator can be deactivated by a cathartic experience by being purged to respond to the performance. He stresses the fact that the Aristotelian 'coercive system' has since been incorporated in many different systems including television, movies, circus, theaters and in other sorts of media with the main aim to 'bridle the individual' (Boal 1979:47).

Boal's answer to Aristotle's system is a new type of theatre which counteracts with the existent coercive system. His *Poetics of the Oppressed* transforms Aristotle's *Poetics* in which the spectator transfer the power to think, reflect and act to the dramatic character. Instead Boal proposes the spectators to turn into what he calls 'spect-actors' eliminating the invisible space, or 'the fourth wall', that separates audiences from the stage. For Boal the *poetics of the oppressed* are the *poetics of liberation*. The spectator should no longer transfer power to the characters in order to think or act in their place instead 'he himself

assumes the protagonist role, changes the dramatic action, tries out solutions, discusses plans for change – in short trains himself for real action’ (Boal 1979: 122). In Boal’s theatre, spectators can have the chance to examine the problems they are facing in reality, and the reasons and factors that might influence their actions.

For Boal, the work of the Theatre of the Oppressed sets out to provoke its audience, ‘The solution is not to be found in the theatre, but in real life; if in the theatre we dynamize people; we create the habit of looking at all situations as being one possibility among others’ (Boal 1985: 47). Through the dramatic process it is possible to look into the alternatives which exist in the lives of individuals and what is exactly influencing their attitudes. For the landless of the MST the Forum Theatre offered them the possibility of raising hands, speaking and becoming involved in a dialogue to try to resolve some of their problems. This differs greatly from most of the assemblies and meetings organized by the MST, where normally only leadership talk and the audience listen.

As Boal states, when practicing Forum Theatre, more than to get a solution, participants develop the capacity to learn, debate and possibly find a solution to a specific problem. The Theatre of the Oppressed is a language, a form of knowledge and it should not be treated as definitive. Therefore, in order for any process of change to occur, it is necessary that people are continuously involved in the process of questioning. ‘In a Theatre of the Oppressed show, spectators do not exist in the simple “spectare = to see” sense; here to be a spectator means to prepare oneself for action, and *preparing oneself* is already in itself an action’ (Boal 1995: 72). Like Boal, Freire also believes that, in order to begin a process of internal change, every person should be conscious of her/his oppressed status. Only in that way, can one ‘become a protagonist in the liberation process’ (Freire 1979: 155).

In order to understand how the Theatre of the Oppressed works, it is necessary to keep in mind Boal’s main objective: ‘To change the people - “spectators,” passive beings in the theatrical phenomenon - into subjects, into actors, transformers of the dramatic action’ (Boal 2000: 122) and to achieve this, a particular and unique kind of relationship between audience and performers needs to be implemented: In a Theatre of the Oppressed session

there are no *spectators*: there are only *active observers*. (or spect-actors). The centre of gravity is in the auditorium not on the stage' (Boal 1995:40).

The fundamental principles in the Theatre of the Oppressed are to encourage audience members to become protagonists in the theatrical actions and to apply those rehearsed actions experienced in the fiction of the theatre in real life. For this objective to be put into action, the premise that there is no difference between fiction and reality stands as one of Boal's central principles.

In Boal's later work, *Rainbow of Desire*, Boal writes that the 'most essential' definition of theatre is based on the dramatist Lope de Vega, for whom 'theatre are two human beings, a passion and a platform' (Boal 1995:16). The number two quoted is essential to understand the implication within those two characters stating the dialogical aspect of human relationships and its multiple conflicting situations more than their individual isolation. 'The object that Lope de Vega calls the 'platform' has as its primary function the creation of a *separation*, a *division* between the space of the actor – the one who *acts* – and the space of the spectator – the one who *observes*' (Boal 1995:18). For Boal the 'theatre platform' is a 'time-space'. It exists as such and will retain its particular properties as long as spectators are present (Boal 1995:19). For Boal anyone who creates an 'aesthetic space' becomes an actor and plays a role, moving the emphasis of theatre from matter understood as objectively related to the staging of a piece towards the subject interpreting and practicing it. In Boal's approach the presence of the actor is enough to develop his method: 'Theatre does not exist in the objectivity of bricks and mortar, sets and costumes, but in the subjectivity of those who practice it, at the moment when they practice it. It needs neither stage nor audience; the actor will suffice' (Boal 1995:19).

The question of well-defined limits according to conventional theatrical experience becomes threatened from the perspective of Boal's methodology because 'the human being not only "makes" theatre: it "is" theatre. And some human beings, besides being theatre, also make theatre' (Boal 1995:13) shifting all the attention towards the subjective theatrical experience as the paradigm to be explored: 'With the actor is born the theatre. The actor is

theatre. We are all actors: we are theatre!’ (Boal 1995:19).³³

His sustained approach keeps addressing the essential point that works as the invisible dialogical backbone of his creation, i.e., the “other” as conflict is never absent from the point trying to be resolved:

Theatre denotes conflict, contradiction, confrontation, defiance. And the dramatic action lies in the variation and movement of this equation, of these opposing forces. Monologues will not be “theatre” unless the antagonist, though absent, is implied; unless her *absence* is *present* (Boal 1995:16). This theatrical language reflects life, our own reality. Boal also defines theatre as ‘a vocation for all human beings: it is the true nature of humanity’ (Boal 1995:14).

The affirmation that ‘there is no difference between life and theatre’, allowed Boal to create a method where reality could be represented, reflected and possibly changed.

He defines his Theatre of the Oppressed as ‘a system of physical exercises, aesthetic games, image techniques and special improvisations whose goal is to safeguard, develop and reshape this human vocation, by turning the practice of theatre into an effective tool for the comprehension of social and personal problems and the search for their solutions’ (Boal 1995:14-15). Boal has systematized his methods in a way that the oppressed could rehearse their lives through theatre.

³³See parallel with art movement in Brazil during 1960s on page 53.

3.2 Augusto Boal in Rio de Janeiro, New York and São Paulo

Augusto Boal was born in Rio de Janeiro in 1931. In *Hamlet and the Baker's Son* (2001), Boal writes that his love for theatre began when he started to create little theatrical shows for his family as little more than a ten-year-old. He always loved reading and writing and when he read a story and did not like it, he would rewrite it.

During his early theatrical experiments with his siblings and cousins, no one owned specific characters, meaning that anyone could enter the scene at any critical moment to interpret what they wanted. Although theatre was his passion in 1948, he ended up applying to study Chemistry, as a way to please his father and also to stay close to a girlfriend who was going to study the same subject. An unexpected surprise changed his plans; the result of the exams revealed that Boal passed but not his girlfriend. In addition to studying Chemistry at University he also became the director of the School's Cultural Department. This position gave him the opportunity to organize a series of cultural events and also the chance to see, 'for free', as many theatrical productions as he wanted in Rio. Amongst the cultural events Boal had to organize at the University were a series of public meetings with renowned Brazilian artists including Nelson Rodrigues (1912-80), one of Brazil's leading playwrights who transformed the Brazilian theatre with his stylistic experiments. Through their friendship, Rodrigues ended up introducing Boal to many prestigious people in the world of Brazilian theatre, including the director of Arena Theatre, José Renato (1926-) who would later offer Boal the opportunity to begin his theatrical experiments.

Boal graduated in 1952 and decided to study a further year in US, at Columbia University. At this time he decided not only to please his father but also himself. While in New York, he continued his studies in Chemistry but also simultaneously studied theatre. One of Boal's greatest ambitions was to study playwriting with the theatre historian and drama critic John Gassner (1902-66).

During the first few months in New York, Boal felt lost and lonely, many times questioning the reason for being away from Rio. His difficulty in adapting encouraged him

to get involved in cultural programs at the University, including the Writers' Group in Brooklyn.

While in New York, Boal had the chance to see a series of plays and met some renowned Brazilian artists and famous theatre directors from other parts of the world, but undoubtedly his experiences at the Actors' Studio, studying with Gassner and his study of the works of Bertold Brecht (1898-1956) and Konstantin Stanislavski (1863-1938) became important references to his work.

In her analysis of Gassner's influences on Boal, Babbage points to the fact that 'Gassner recognized realism as a hugely important and largely positive influence in the modern American theatre'. For him, 'learning the principles of realistic playwriting – for example, that the main function of dialogue is to advance action rather than be quotable as 'literature' – would lead to better drama' (Babbage 2004:7). For Gassner the necessary invigoration of contemporary theatre was therefore to be achieved by moving beyond false perceptions of realism and theatricalism as opposite polarities towards an integration of the two in 'active and secure partnership (Babbage 2004: 8). Gassner's argument is that theatre 'exploits both illusion and anti-illusion.' For him, in a certain moment audiences can sense reality and in another they can also experience a theatrical effect. Equally and simultaneously audiences can experiment with 'theatrical' and 'real' (Babbage 2004: 8).

Certainly Boal's future theatrical developments were greatly influenced by his study of realism, but certainly it was his re-encounter with the social and political reality of his home country that contributed most significantly to his appreciation of the need to create a new theatrical format.

3.3 Arena Theatre

Boal returned to Brazil in 1955 and went to work as a director and playwright at Arena Theatre in São Paulo from 1956 to 1971.³⁴ While most theatrical productions in Brazil until the early 1950s modelled themselves on European theatre, Boal began his work at Arena with an agenda to develop a truly Brazilian dramaturgy, a realistic critical theatre

³⁴ Arena Theatre has a very important role on the development of the Brazilian Theatre. Anderson (1996), Ridenti (2000), Boal (2000).

with themes representing the social and political reality of Brazil (Schutzman & Cohen-Cruz 1994: 2).

In 1956, Arena Theatre entered their 'realistic' stage (Boal 1979:159). Boal began a series of theatrical experiments, of which the most important was the Drama Seminar in 1958, organized in collaboration with Gianfrancesco Guarnieri and Oduvaldo Filho (Ridenti 2000:105).

During the same year, Arena also produced one of the most important Brazilian plays, *Eles Não Usam Black-Tie* (They Don't Wear Black-Tie), a major Arena success based on a workers' strike, which took place in São Paulo. Meanwhile in Brazil's rural areas, landless peasants formed '*Ligas Camponesas*', a movement seeking land and rights to the landless peasants, which became a great inspiration for Brazil's Landless Movement of today.

The 1960s and the early 1970s were a period where politics has directly influenced the Brazilian cultural scene. This period has been described by Ridenti as the period of the "Revolutionary Romanticism", (Ridenti 2000: 12) a term created to describe the political actions of artists and intellectuals working amongst political parties and left wing movements, mainly originating from the Brazilian middle classes.

Initially, they (artists) were involved in a threefold process: to define a national cultural identity in both form and content; to demolish boundaries between artist and viewer; and to expose Brazil's poverty and inequality in the hope of stimulating socio economic reform by raising public consciousness (Britton, 2006: 11).

In May 1962, in Pernambuco (Northeast of Brazil), the Movement of Popular Culture supported the production of a series of educational and artistic developments in the region, including some of the practical experiences of the application of 'Paulo Freire method' and the productions of the Theatre of Popular Culture which was beginning to gain momentum with the presentation of the play *The Judgment in Novo Sol* (1963) directed by Augusto Boal, Nelson Xavier e Amilton Trevisan.

At the Arena Theatre in São Paulo Boal took part in similar discussions on the idea of creating a popular political theatre, and this culminated in the creation of the Popular Centres of Culture (CPC) which began its activities in December 1961 (Martins: 1979).

The CPCs were created by the National Students' Union (UNE) with the main objective to create popular art using all forms of expression in Brazilian culture including, theatre, cinema, music, literature, and plastic arts.

As Néstor García Canclini states, the CPC 'deployed an enormous diffusing task of culture by redefining it as *conscientization*' (Canclini 1995:195). Under the CPC, theatre has occupied a privileged space, assuming that art and culture are a way to raise critical consciousness amongst the masses.

The CPC elaborated a manifesto written in March 1962. This document generated a debate about the creation of 'agencies of popular culture' in a series of Brazilian states during that year. Before this document, there were no Brazilian studies covering debates amongst artists and intellectuals interested in working with revolutionary art and the masses (Martins 1979: 67-79).

The determination to introduce a revolutionary art to the people, inspired Boal and other artists into a series of tours to some of the poorest areas of the country: 'We toured the poorer northern provinces of Brazil, playing in the streets, in front of the churches, on trucks, anywhere, for a peasant and worker audience. After each performance we discussed the play with the audience' (Boal 1970: 91-96).

These journeys to the Northeast of Brazil put him in direct contact with an aspect of Brazilian reality: poverty, hunger and the peasants fighting for land, problems which continue today to affect a huge number of Brazilians.

As mentioned earlier, it was the inadequacy of an agit-prop piece presented to a group of rural landless workers from *Ligas Camponesas*, and Boal's particular experience with the peasant Virgílio, that made him reflect on the message of his revolutionary art. A period of

introspection allowed Boal to consider how much Virgílio's experience had been a key factor and also an inspiration for the creation of a theatrical method where people would have access to the means of production of cultural creation.

While reflecting about his experiences during the early 1960s, Boal observed that

During that time, the political theatre we produced, used to take messages to the people, and on these messages we used to tell them exactly what they should do as if they did not have any ideas, desires or knowledge. The message was intransitive, we never asked the peasants what were their thoughts, what were their needs, we only used to say what they should do as if they were all the same as if there were not individualities.³⁵

3.4 Boal and Paulo Freire

During one of these journeys to the Northeast of the country in the early 1960s Boal met the Brazilian radical pedagogue Paulo Freire, who also believed in theatre as a fundamental tool to educate people. Freire's theatrical experiences involved adapting his methods of education to the theatre. He advocated substituting the traditional role of the teacher for a 'coordinator' whose function consisted in encouraging debate in a very open, sincere and informal manner creating a 'culture circle' where the classroom transforms itself into a democratic and spontaneous 'debate'. This 'culture circle' was then transformed into a theatre, where stage and audience were fused. In that way, theatre was offered a new channel of communication 'linking the stage to the audience and vice-versa' (Gadotti 1996: 619).

By transforming the classroom into a stage, Freire injected his dynamic educational methods into theatre. The resulting dialogue or play was transformed into a constructive educational dialogue. For Freire, the learning process should be based on dialogue rather than what he called the 'banking method of education,' whereby mindless students are filled with information from 'experts' (Freire: 1970:52-67).

Freire's educational methods and ways to provoke dialogue were an important inspiration for the development of Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed. More specifically Freire's

³⁵ Author Interview [London 2004.]

coordinator of debates in the classroom can be compared to Boal's joker figure in Forum Theatre. Like Freire, Boal has also centred his activities on engaging people in a constructive and participative debate in order to fight oppression. Hence, his book *The Theatre of the Oppressed* became to be seen as an homage to Freire.

The effervescent period of cultural and educational experiences taking place across the country, would suddenly end on the 31st of March of 1964. The political and economic instability which was continuously present in the country much before 1960s, and the new liberal ideas of the President João Goulart, especially his audacious plan to achieve agrarian reform and the wave of communist ideology spreading across Latin America, had encouraged the Brazilian conservative forces to organize a *coup d'état*. Amongst the many reactionary actions organized by the new political power was the end of the Popular Centres of Culture. Many people including intellectuals, artists, students, teachers and others who did not share the regime's imposed views were sent to prison, amongst them Paulo Freire, who at the time had been working on a project to eradicate illiteracy in the country. This new political scenario and the censorship introduced by the military political regime encouraged many artists to find new ways of subversively producing their work. Isolated from his political context, Boal returned again to the Arena Theatre where he chose to continue to produce plays denouncing the new system and exploring possibilities of resistance.

3.5 The Emergence of the *Joker System*

The production of the protest musical *Arena Conta Zumbi* (*Arena Tells of Zumbi* 1965) directed by Boal and written by both himself and Gianfrancesco Guarnieri, is the first of a series of plays entitled "*Arena Tells...*" Zumbi is considered an especially important musical protest in the history of Brazilian theatre. The play is based on 'Zumbi' a leader of a slave revolt in Brazil during the seventeenth-century. As Babbage writes, 'Zumbi, drew vivid parallels between the attacks on the colony and the tactics of the Brazilian military at the time of the coup and later, and by celebrating rebellion in the past sought to stimulate resistance in the present' (Babbage 2004:13).

Behind Zumbi's creation lies Boal's essential desire to destroy all the conventional structures of theatre that became obstacles to the development of theatrical aesthetics. The play offers a sense of discontinuity, disorder, and chaos. It even destroyed empathy as a way to avoid audience members identifying themselves with any characters of the play, but at the same time Boal stresses that empathy should be re-evaluated and incorporated within a new system that would 'incorporate it and make it perform a compatible function (Boal 2000: 166).

During the Zumbi phase four basic techniques were developed; *Actor-character separation*, *Collective narration*, *Stylistic eclecticism*, and *Music*. For Boal, the use of these four techniques represented 'the end of one stage or research. The stage of "destruction" of the theatre was concluded, and the beginning of new forms was proposed' (Boal 2000, 172).

The outcome of Zumbi was *O Sistema Coringa* (The Joker System)³⁶ and it is at this point where Boal's theory partially detaches from Brecht (Rosenfeld, 1979: 45). The Joker System is defined by Boal as:

A system (including playwriting, interpretation, scene design, etc) enabling us to use every style, genre, technique, or process. Each scene was completely autonomous: one realistic, the other expressionistic. All these styles, however, are held within a single style, the 'tribunal', by the presence of the joker as a judge (Boal 1970: 91-96).³⁷

In her investigative online installation, *The Joker Runs Wild*, Mady Schutzman refers to the *Joker System* as:

A theatrical approach within Boal's oeuvre that merges the influence of Brecht and circus'. For her, it 'foregrounds techniques that analytically deconstruct habits of thought, action, and time; they foster positive orientation, the kind that demands new and/or deeper insight (Schutzman 2006: 133,145).

³⁶ See 'The Joker System: An Experiment by the Arena Theatre of Sao Paulo by Augusto Boal' *The Drama Review: TDR*, Vol.14, N.2, Latin America Theatre (Winter, 1970), pp.91-96)

³⁷ The joker system can be seen as pre eminently reflexive within a theatrical context.

Boal describes the Joker as a metaphorical figure, the one who interrupts actions in order to suggest, add or juxtapose and so contributes to the main text of the performance. For Boal, the Joker represents 'the start of the dialogue with the audience, which I would later develop fully with the Theatre of the Oppressed' (Boal, 1992: 242). As for Babbage, she sees the Joker as a 'wild-card figure who could mediate between characters and audiences, comment critically on the narrative and, at certain points, intervene directly in the action' (Babbage 2004: 14). Anatol Rosenfeld sees the joker as 'the *porta-voz* (spokesperson) of the actor who establishes a close relationship with the audience'. For him, 'the constant communication between actor and audience establishes transitions between space and time, and fiction and reality: a radical function which does not exist in Brechtian theatre' (Rosenfeld 1979:45).

Sábato Magaldi points out that the *Joker System* represents 'the synthesis of two fundamental methods of the modern theatre – Stanislavski and Brecht, in which an experience would be lived and discussed with the spectator' (Magaldi 1967).

Rosenfeld has written one of the most detailed critical analyses of the *Joker System* and although he has identified some contradictions and stylistic problems in Boal's theories, he stresses the fact that Boal's *Joker System* represents the most important Brazilian dramaturgic device created in that period (Rosenfeld 1979).

In December 1968, the Military regime installed an even more repressive system in the country making it nearly impossible to perform popular theatre. The last time the *Joker System* was presented in Brazil was in 1969. However, the relationship between the *Joker System* and other later methods gained life when Boal adapted the figure of the joker into Forum Theatre.

3.6 Newspaper Theatre

Having experienced a series of repressive events, especially the intervention of the military in a series of Brazilian unions and universities, Boal began to think about a theatrical technique in which people would be able to make the theatre themselves instead of only receiving it as consumers.

Newspaper Theatre was first developed by the Nucleus Group, as part of Arena Theatre, and is defined as a series of techniques³⁸ created to transform news items or any other non-dramatic text, into performances (Boal, 2000: 143).

The major objectives of this new method were to transfer theatre to the people, to teach them how to read and interpret the news published by journalists and enable any person to learn and practice this collective experience anywhere. Boal wanted to use theatre to involve people in a process of *conscientização*.³⁹ For him it was important that people understood that news is created to defend powerful interests: 'What was more important: the fate of the Brazilian team in the World Cup or the government's lack of concern for the fate of millions of peasants dying of hunger in north-east Brazil?' (Boal 1998:235). Magaldi states that Newspaper Theatre was 'an exercise in freedom – in the middle of dictatorship, imprisonment, torture and death' (Boal 2001:282).

Boal's work with Arena would come to an end in 1971 when he was arrested, tortured and illegally held in solitary confinement, 'For three months Boal was held in the Department of Political and Social Order, accused of crimes against Brazil. His release was largely the result of a national and international protest which had the support of a series of well-known playwrights such as Arthur Miller' (Babbage 2004: 15-16).

Prior to its collapse in 1971 the Arena Theatre was under a serious economic and political crisis. Boal and some of his colleagues in the group 'Nucleus', decided to teach ordinary people how to use the Newspaper Theatre technique as a way of continuing the work of questioning and promoting debate on the political developments of the country.

Boal wanted to encourage participants to practice performance anywhere, 'We would write our shows and, two hours later, they were ready for the audience. 'Instantaneous Theatre, lightning-quick'(Boal 2001: 282). More importantly, however, he wanted people to learn how to interpret words and the political context behind them.

³⁸ In 1998, Boal published the eleven techniques which form the Newspaper Theatre: 1) Simple Reading, The Complementary Reading, The Cross Reading, The Rhythmical Reading, The Reinforced Reading, The Parallel Action, The Historical Reading, Improvisation, The Concretion Of Abstraction, Text of context and Insertion into the actual context. (Boal 1998: 234-246)

³⁹ See Chapter Four for an in-depth analysis of *conscientização*.

Boal's final sentencing in May 1971 forced him into exile. Initially, he went to live in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

3.7 Invisible Theatre

While living in Buenos Aires⁴⁰, Boal also witnessed another military dictatorship taking power. Once again under a repressive state, creativity would have to help him to continue his work. At the time, Boal was working and preparing a play about hunger with a group called *El Machete* (Boal 2000:33). In his autobiography he recalls:

With my students, I prepared scenes for the street based on a law that allowed any hungry person to go into a restaurant, however luxurious, and eat and drink whatever they liked, dessert and wine excepted; on showing their identity card, they could then leave without paying (Boal 2001:303).

As the political circumstances did not allow street performances to continue, and to avoid the police presence, an idea emerged of presenting the performance as 'Invisible Theatre', inside of a restaurant. In this way people would not be aware that a performance was taking place. This suggestion resulted in a scenario involving a series of actors presenting such an invisible performance inside a restaurant where a customer/actor was unable to pay for his meal. 'Reality took on the characteristics of fiction, fiction appeared like reality' (Boal 2001: 304). This new technique allowed Boal and his students to perform anywhere they wanted in Argentina. And although Invisible Theatre is compared to 'agit-prop' street theatre, Adrian Jackson emphasizes that the essential difference between these two practices is that in Invisible Theatre the audience is free to take up any position it wants and has no feeling of being preached to (Boal 1992: Introduction).

The main proposition of Invisible Theatre is to reveal and raise awareness of a specific social situation. Boal defines this technique as:

A presentation of a scene in an environment other than the theatre, before people who are not spectators. The place can be a restaurant, a sidewalk, a market, a train, a line of people, etc. The people who witness the scene are those who are there by

⁴⁰ While Boal was living in Argentina, he also continued to work as a writer, teacher and director, giving workshops and lectures in Mexico, USA, Colombia, Venezuela and Peru.

chance. During the spectacle, these people must not have the slightest idea that it is a 'spectacle,' for this would make them 'spectators (Boal 2000:143-144).

During rehearsals of Invisible Theatre, all actors have to work with optimum imagination, specifically concerning human interventions. They have to be prepared to include some of the audience ideas into the performance. 'In Invisible Theatre, the actors must perform just like real actors; that is, they must live' (Boal 1992:6). Their acting has to be as real as possible in order to provoke audience members to participate in debates as spect-actors. As Boal states: 'Invisible Theatre is not realism: it is reality' (Boal 1992:15).

Although the interventions of Invisible Theatre take place in reality, Boal stresses the fact that Invisible Theatre is Theatre and in order for it to take place, [...] it must have a text with a scripted core, which will inevitably be modified, according to the circumstances, to suit the interventions of spect-actors' (Boal 1992:6). The main proposition of this technique is in line with the main objectives of the Theatre of the Oppressed: to make oppressive realities visible and encourage public debate on topics related to social injustices.

Boal stresses the fact that the Theatre of the Oppressed language functions to show how reality can be changed. However, before this experience can take place it is important that people first have to recognize that their reality needs to be changed.

Boal did not keep the practices of Invisible Theatre contained in Argentina and other countries where he lived and worked: 'In the course of our European experiences, we did shows in the Paris Metro, in ferryboats, in the restaurants and streets of Stockholm, and even on a stage, in a theatre where a conference was taking place' (Boal 1992:6). One of the Invisible Theatre experiences in Brazil took place during 1989 when Boal decided to help the Worker's Party political campaign in São Paulo.

The main scene involved Boal and his group introducing themselves to the public within an open market, as members of an invented organization entitled the National Institute for Electoral Research. Claiming they were doing scientific research they asked people about their motivation to vote for a specific candidate. By asking questions like 'If Lula gets

elected – and you know the last poll says that he will, it's inevitable – so when he gets elected, what do you think should be the first actions?' While people were beginning to join the debate, it could be noticed that the act of answering that question was making people think about what exactly Lula could offer to them. Although this experience only reached a limited number of people, Boal is convinced they influenced some voter's opinions (Shutzman and Cohen-Cruz 1994: 228-232).

Invisible Theatre provokes a quite unique situation. It breaks with all theatrical conventions and not only allows everyone to become an active participant of a performance but also allows people to practice theatre anywhere they like.

3. 8 Image Theatre

In 1973 Boal went to Peru, to teach in a literacy campaign – *Operación Alfabetización Integral* (ALFIN) - designed to eradicate illiteracy in the country. ALFIN was based on Freire's concept of *conscientização*. By following Freire's principles, Boal challenged the role of the participants, creating a vital channel of dialogue between educators and students.

There, he worked with the most basic vocabulary of theatre - the human body. Physical exercises and games were the first stages of Image Theatre, a practice which works in combination with other forms of Theatre of the Oppressed, especially Forum Theatre. 'Image Theatre, was born because my Peruvian students spoke forty-seven mother tongues...as they made images, the techniques were born, from the simplest, the image of word, to the complex introspective techniques' (Boal 2001: 310).

The focus of attention on the development of the physical aspect of the individual was intended to make participants aware of their bodies and find new ways to express themselves. Also this technique offered participants an equality of opportunity, particularly for those who are unable to express themselves verbally.

Philip Auslander notes that Boal's 'analysis of the social deformation of the body is based directly upon Marx's account of alienated labour' and 'because the mechanisms of

oppression shape the body, it is through the body and its habits that those mechanisms can be exposed' (Auslender 1994:128). Boal's games and exercises propose a 'de-mechanisation' of the body. 'So that each worker, each peasant understands, sees, and feels to what point his body is governed by his work' (Boal 2000: 128).

In a Theatre of the Oppressed workshop, Image Theatre will always be part of the first stages of the work, so people can develop different forms of perception.

The first stage involved participants identifying a topic aimed to examine some aspects of their reality – especially the oppressive elements which surround them. One by one, they have to represent it, non-verbally, with a 'sculpt' image made out of their bodies.

As soon as the image is presented, other participants get involved in a debate to find out if the composed image is the appropriate one to represent the chosen theme. If the sculptural image is not considered satisfactory, new images are created.

Once all participants agree with the piece created, the exercise continues. This first stage is called 'Real Image', defined by Boal as "the image of reality", this image must always represent a form of oppression.

The participants are then invited to create an image in order to reveal the Ideal Image, an image without oppression, representing the world they want to live in. Other participants are always informed about the right to modify the sculptured image in case it was not representing the chosen theme.

The workshop continues involving participants in the creation of an image that could represent the move from the 'real image' to the 'ideal image'. The result of this exercise and third process is entitled Image of the Possible Transition.

In the last stage of the workshop, the participants who contributed as sculptors are invited to modify their initially created 'real image'. From a frozen image they should now represent it in slow motion movements, rather than representing it in normal speed. At this

time, sound is integrated into these sequences. With movement and sound, participants are now taking part in what Boal calls the dynamization process. That means, by giving rhythm to the still images created, participants describe with the most genuine feelings information about the world she/he is attempting to represent.

The main requirement of Image theatre is that participants learn to communicate with each other by using a new language – the body language and not the spoken word. Therefore, the construction of a single image would diminish the amount of subjective possibilities offered by this technique.

While Boal was working with ALFIN, he also created the techniques of Simultaneous Dramaturgy, where all participants contributed to the creation and shaping of playwriting. The text and development of the play was the result of a collective creation, therefore all the ideas and outcomes of the story represented the audiences' point of view.

Members of the audience would suggest ways to develop the story, and actors would improvise scenes until the point where a critical moment was reached in the story. The performance would then stop and the audience would be invited to offer different ideas to manipulate how the story progressed. All suggestions would then be played out by the actors. Although the ideas came from the people there was still an invisible wall dividing the audience from the actors.

3.9 Forum Theatre

It was during experiments in Simultaneous Dramaturgy in Peru in 1973 that a new experience took place and moved the work of Boal into another sphere. The emergence of Forum Theatre occurred when Boal was exploring ways to resolve a situation involving a young woman who discovers that her husband is having an affair. A series of scenes were performed by the actors as a way to investigate how the young woman should act in real life. Amongst them, there was a single scene suggested by a woman in the audience that actors were not able to present accurately. After various attempts Boal decided to invite her 'to come up on stage and show, herself, what she had in mind. I invited her to *enact* her thoughts, instead of just *speaking* them. She entered the scene, taking on the role of the character, dividing herself: she and the character' (Boal 2001: 309).

This new form of participation and interaction broke the most rigid and pre-established rule of theatre – that of a spectator trespassing on the 'fourth' invisible wall, which had been created to separate spectators from the stage. At that moment the term 'spect-actor' was born and became the most well know term in Boal's theatre. The 'spect-actor' is the culmination of all Boal's experiments and his attempts to liberate the passive role of the audience and make them active participants of theatre. Already during the early 1970s he wrote:

Spectator, a bad word! The spectator is less than a man and it is necessary to humanize him, to restore to him his capacity of action in all its fullness. He too must be a subject, an actor on an equal plane with those generally accepted as actors, who must also be spectators (Boal 2000:155).

As Boal observes, 'in a traditional theatre show the *spectator-character* (or spectator-actor) relationship comes into being by means of what is called empathy: *em*, *_,* inside, *pathos*, emotion.' He points out that this emotion is primary, driving us because 'we are led by characters and actions not under our control; we experience "a *vicarious* emotion' (Boal 1995:42).

In Forum Theatre, a different dimension is offered to the participants. Within an aesthetic space, they can create 'their own world of images of their own oppressions, their *active observer (spect-actor)-character* relationship changes in essence and becomes sympathy:

sym, with. We are not led, we lead' (Boal 1995:42). Instead of being driven by the emotion of characters, spect-actors project their own emotion into the scene. By doing this, the spectator turned spect-actor becomes the "subject."

Since the early 1970s, both Image Theatre and Forum Theatre techniques have been used as the groundwork for Boal's main techniques.

3.9.1 Emotion: Memory

Boal began to experiment with the idea of 'emotion memory', one of Stanislavski's⁴¹ techniques in 1956. For him 'memory is important, but only when it is transported to the present – when memory becomes the present, when "I have felt" becomes "I am feeling again." He also remarks that 'emotion memory exercises can be effective and useful, especially in the different versions of the breaking of oppression exercises' (Boal 1992:47).

While analysing the video documentation produced in Brazil, I came across peasant explanations that vividly revealed the phenomenon of 'emotion memory'. The first spect-actor to express a notion of this phenomenon was Miss Iraci, a 60 year old peasant who for the previous 10 years had been living in MST camps: 'I intervened in that scene because I had already faced that situation, I had already been expelled from MST camps before (and I know how the police can be violent with the landless). I intervened in that scene because I wanted to help my other friends and save our camp'. Another landless peasant expressing his views on participating as a spect-actor was Mr. Adão, who remarked that 'Most of the people participating in the MST actions on one level or another have already experienced conflict with the police, including myself. I intervened in that scene because I wanted to avoid situations which I had lived through in the past.'⁴²

Within the extracts cited above, it is possible to perceive how the 'emotion memory' mode works, particularly the way in which it leads spect-actors towards interventions in Forum Theatre.

⁴¹ See the influence of the method of Stanislavski on Boal's work in "The Structure of the Actor's Work", (Boal, *Games for Actors and Non-Actors* p.40)

⁴² Author interview

In the Theatre of the Oppressed there are a series of exercises and games that are specifically designed to activate people's emotions, but for Boal, this type of activation is not sufficient. He highlights the fact that what really matters is the understanding of the real causes underpinning the emotion. Forum Theatre offers people not only the chance to feel emotion as part of their experience, but also the opportunity to try to understand it. For Boal 'that is the role of art – not only to show how the world is, but also why it is thus and how it can be transformed.' (Boal 2002: 36).

In Forum Theatre, audience members have an opportunity to identify themselves with an oppressed protagonist in the theatrical space. This identification leads them to intervene and to enter into a dialogue with the oppressor in order to try to reverse the oppression presented in the scene.⁴³ This dialogue can result in further interpretations of the social, political and personal problems surrounding their lives.

The combination of dialogue and freedom of expression experienced in Forum Theatre offers spect-actors possibilities to experiment with a different form of theatre. A scene is created and re-created as many times as necessary, as long as spectators are willing to interact with it. As Boal notes, 'the main objective of Forum Theatre is to encourage autonomous activity, to set a process in motion, to stimulate transformative creativity[...]' (Boal 1992:245).

In *Games for Actors and Non Actors* (1992) Boal emphasizes the fundamental principles of the Theatre of the Oppressed, that 'spect-actors must be the protagonists of the dramatic action and these spect-actors must prepare themselves to be the protagonists of their own lives' (Boal 1992: 242).

The dramaturgy of Forum Theatre involves participants debating a topic and creating a script in which the nature of the subject is recognized by the audience. As revealed in the plays *The Eviction* and *The Promise* included in *Rehearsing Reality*, both present a scene of oppression, so that the audience can reflect on it, find a solution to the problem and present a new way to confront the oppressive situation. Forum Theatre can be constructed

⁴³ See page 47 for explanation on how Boal's Poetics of the Oppressed diverges from Aristotle's Poetics.

using any genre with the exception of ‘surrealism’: realism, symbolism or expressionism. (Boal 1992: 19).

For Boal, the aim of his theatre, ‘is not to close a circle, to generate a catharsis, or to end a development’ (Boal 1992:245). Instead, Theatre of the Oppressed, should be identified more precisely as the ‘initiator of changes - a rehearsal to be continued in real life. It can be used as a method to reflect, clarify and analyse reality, it can prepare people to rehearse their future actions. ‘In the present, we re-live the past to create the future’ (Boal 1998: 9).

In *Rehearsing Reality*⁴⁴, Jane Plastow critically comments on Forum Theatre. For her there are no clear rules about who can replace whom in a Forum Theatre performance. She also doubts that spectators can spontaneously become spect-actors.

That affirmation could only be validated if the joker’s role is not well understood and if she/he do not belong to the same reality of the audience.

As Boal points out, ‘For a Forum Theatre show to qualify as true Theatre of the Oppressed, only spect-actors who are victims of the same oppression as the character (by identity or by analogy) can replace the oppressed protagonist to find new approaches or new forms of liberation’ (Boal 1992: 240).

During the early 1970s, at the beginning of Forum Theatre, Boal stated that, ‘any participant in the audience has the right to replace any actor and lead the action in the direction that seems to him the most appropriate’ (Boal 1979:139). But nowadays, Boal emphasizes the fact that spect-actors can only replace the main protagonist (oppressed). He writes: ‘The audience is informed that the first step is to take the protagonist’s place[...]’ (Boal 1992:20). Boal further outlined that ‘if by chance, the audience at a particular moment and for a particular reason decides to change these rules, then you change them’ (Boal 1992:242). Boal clearly demarcates that although in Forum Theatre there are rules, within these rules freedom also exists. For Boal, Forum Theatre is ‘the most democratic form of the Theatre of the Oppressed’ (Boal 2006:6).

⁴⁴ See *Rehearsing Reality* sequence *Joker*

Today, there are many Forum Theatre experiences taking place around the world. Although it may seem that practitioners follow most of Boal's suggestions, some of them do not follow the rules of the Theatre of the Oppressed by the book.

Currently, new adaptations and modifications of Forum Theatre are taking place in different cultural contexts. In some cases, what seems to be happening is that theatre practitioners are using their ability and sensitivity to understand people's needs in their search to identify and confront oppression. As mentioned in Chapter One, this is specifically the case of Theatre of the Oppressed practitioners working in Israel, and Canada. In these countries, the practitioners have adapted, modified and expanded Boal's Forum Theatre methods in order to use it for their own cultural needs.

3.9.2 The Joker

In *Games for Actors and Non Actors*, Boal states that all the audience has to do in order to interact with the stage is to shout 'Stop' (1992:20). But this is not always the case. In a great number of Forum Theatre performances, including the ones presented in *Rehearsing Reality*, interactions are always encouraged by the figure of the joker, the figure that has been adapted from Boal's Joker System.

Boal describes the joker as, 'the wild card, leader of the game'. Jokers are always in charge of introducing the performance, explaining the rules and coordinating the debate and interactions amongst audience and stage (Boal 1992:21). But the joker's role itself is also quite often questioned and criticized.⁴⁵

Aware of the criticisms around the joker figure, in *Games for Actors-and Non-actors* (1992), Boal wrote a set of six rules described by him as 'almost obligatory' to all jokers. All of them are related to 'The conduct of the Joker'. The most important one can be found on line one of the first rule: 'Jokers must avoid all actions which could manipulate or influence the audience' (Boal 1992: 232-234).

As seen in *Rehearsing Reality*, some criticisms can be raised when examining the joker's role when they are leading performances. In some cases, instead of emphasizing a strong

⁴⁵ See *Rehearsing Reality* sequence Joker.

debate amongst the audience, it is clear that their main focus is to provoke spectators to become 'spect-actors'. Also after performances, they have lost the opportunity to further continue the debate with the audience. This runs counter to Boal's theory that the main priority of the joker should be to encourage debate prior interactions; otherwise they reduce the potential of dialogue and debate amongst the audience.

Recent interviews⁴⁶ published by the International Centre of the Theatre of the Oppressed, reveal that charisma, sincerity, respect, attention and observation are essential elements that every Joker should apply while participating in a performance.

3.10 The European phase of the Theatre of the Oppressed

The political situation in Argentina became worse after the death of President Juan Peron in 1974. Terror and repression intensified and working with theatre became almost impossible. After all his theatrical experiences in Latin America, Boal and his family left their main base in Argentina and departed for Portugal in 1976. In Portugal Boal found an entirely different political climate. In the same year the country would have its first democratic elections in fifty years. For two years he worked as an artistic director and as a teacher while also teaching in other countries in Europe, but after an invitation to lecture at the Sorbonne in Paris, his life and work took a new direction. The main result of this work was the creation of the first Centre d'Étude et Diffusion des Techniques Actives d'Expression or CÉDITADE in 1979.

A series of Theatre of the Oppressed workshops sessions were conducted at this centre and, as the technique began to spread, the first International Festival of the Theatre of the Oppressed took place in 1981 in Paris.

Although oppression can be seen as taking place all over the world, it was through Forum Theatre that Boal realized the distinction between oppression suffered in Latin American countries and that experienced by Europeans. Instead of a real external oppressor, he realized that the oppression effecting people in Western Europe was related to "loneliness, an inability to communicate and purposelessness" (Feldhendler 1994:87).

⁴⁶ See www.theatreoftheoppressed.org

By recognizing this difference, Boal and his wife Cecília Thumin, who by this time had become a psychoanalyst, decided to explore the nature of these internalized oppressions and find out in which ways the Theatre of the Oppressed could help individuals in this new and different context. With the help of Cecília Thumin, in 1982, Boal began to elaborate ways of dealing with internalized oppressions and for over two years he led workshops entitled *Flic dans la Tête* (The cop in the head). (Boal, 2001: 324). A title used by Boal to describe the introversion of the European mechanisms of oppression.

Boal's hypothesis was that 'The cops are in our heads, but their headquarters and barracks must be on the outside. The task was to discover how these 'cops' got into our heads, and to invent ways of dislodging them' (Boal 1995:8).

The new experiments placed the Theatre of the Oppressed in a different context: the therapeutic context.⁴⁷ And in 1991 Boal declared that: 'politics is the therapy of society, therapy is the politics of the person' (Feldhendler 1994: 99). The introspective techniques were then developed, under the title of *Rainbow of Desire* (1994) as a way of expressing 'the therapeutic potential of theatre to transform lives'.⁴⁸ Within the Rainbow of Desire techniques, some are specifically designed to help us see our internalized oppressions.

From this point, Boal's work began to be compared to Jacob L. Moreno (1889-1974), the father of psychodrama. Although Boal denies that Moreno was one of his intellectual predecessors, Feldhendler states that 'they share a fundamental conception of theatre and its healing effects and, even further, of human kind' (Feldhendler 1994:89).

While Boal's theatre does explore the protagonist's inner psychic realities, it does so in a way that cannot be considered therapy in the strict sense. A therapeutic frame demands certain indispensable conditions: a clearly established basis of co-operation in which the roles and relationships among the participants are clearly defined (e.g., therapist/client); a clear goal in the sense of a work-task (e.g., relief of certain pains and symptoms of the client) and an agreed-upon time-span for the process. Although it could be argued that the work of Boal is not therapy in the conventional sense, 'it offers healing powers in a socio-political sense' (Feldhendler 1994:94).

⁴⁷ In 1995 Boal launched *The Rainbow of Desire* – the Boal method of theatre and therapy.

⁴⁸ See *Rehearsing Reality* sequence Therapy

In Boal's aesthetic space, every participant is involved in a process where 'subjective and objective realities meet', therefore the participant 'becomes an active protagonist in his /her own life' (Feldhendler 1994: 104).

The expansion of the Theatre of the Oppressed to the therapeutic context, led Boal and others to recognize a new direction in his work. In 1989 he was invited to participate at the International Association of Group Psychotherapy commemorating the centenary of the birth of Moreno. During this occasion he presented his methodology which became the title of his book: *Méthode Boal de théâtre et de thérapie: l' arc-en-ciel du désir* published in 1990 and *The Rainbow of Desire: The Boal Method of Theatre and Therapy* published in 1995.

This shift of critical focus on Boal's work has produced critiques that focus on the individual rather than on society as a whole. However, his response has been that 'we usually work on the boundaries of politics, using Theatre of the Oppressed techniques to study specific events. There are also occasions when the work borders on psychology and psychotherapy, but in every occasion what we are doing is theatre' (Boal 1990:127).

Boal suggests that in the Theatre of the Oppressed, while the protagonist is actively participating on the stage, she/he is not only talking about somebody else, but that a process of identification is also taking place.

3.11 After Exile: The Return to Brazil

With a series of groups practicing and disseminating his methods in Europe, Boal finally returned to Brazil in 1986. He was invited by the local government of Rio de Janeiro to work at the Centre for Popular Education (CIEPS). For six months, Boal worked with a series of groups teaching Theatre of the Oppressed techniques, however funding ran out when the Governor of Rio de Janeiro failed to be re-elected.

In 1989, together with friends who were involved in CIEPS, Boal created the Centre of the Theatre of the Oppressed (CTO) in Rio de Janeiro. Unfortunately, due to the lack of financial support the development of further projects was not allowed and the CTO nearly came to an end. Changes occurred when Boal decided to help the Partido dos

Trabalhadores (PT) Worker's Party campaign with theatrical interventions. The party not only accepted but also persuaded Boal to run an election campaign as a *vereador* (city councilman)) for the PT Workers Party. He accepted and in 1992, Boal was elected and also became president of the Human Rights Commission. He invited all those connected with the Centre of the Theatre of the Oppressed to work with him, producing the first example of this kind of theatrical company working for a government.

After being elected Boal created Legislative Theatre,⁴⁹ his clearest attempt to use theatre as a way to challenge a political system. Legislative Theatre became 'a set of processes which mixes Forum Theatre and the conventional rituals of a parliamentary chamber or assembly, with the objective of arriving at the formulation of coherent and viable bills of law' (Boal 2006: 6). During the four years Boal was in power, the Theatre of the Oppressed worked with a series of groups in Rio de Janeiro, including landless workers, homeless children, homeless elders, black students, *favela*-dwellers, unionized factory workers and battered women. All the ideas debated amongst the groups in Forum and Image Theatre were then brought to the Municipal Chamber and working in collaboration with lawyers, Boal transformed the ideas into legislative bills. Boal created more than thirty bills and thirteen of these became municipal law. Legislative Theatre experiences have also taken place in London, Canada and India.

Boal's experiences as a politician ended in 1996, but since then his practice and research continues. Boal still lives in Brazil but travels a great deal every year to many countries to participate in conferences and lead workshops. Under the Centre of the Theatre of the Oppressed, Boal and his collaborators have been involved in a series of experiences in Brazil, working with a series of marginal communities, including the Landless Movement. In 2004 he launched yet another concept, The Aesthetics Education of the Oppressed⁵⁰ (See Glossary).

⁴⁹ In *Legislative Theatre* Routledge (1988) Boal describes all his experiments with Legislative Theatre.

⁵⁰ See *The Aesthetics of the Oppressed* 2006.

3.12 Conclusion

In this chapter we have examined the genesis and development of Boal's theatre model of working with the oppressed. We looked at how Boal's artistic ideas derived from the specific political climates he lived through and experienced. We also looked into his unconventional methodology, but in particular, we focused on Forum Theatre and its open nature that was provoked by the interactions and dialogue that generated the spect-actor concept. This analysis took us to Sra. Iraci and Sr. Adão, two landless peasants who became spect-actors during the presentation of the play 'The Eviction' presented in *Rehearsing Reality*.

The play provoked their memory and by going back to their past experiences within the MST, Forum Theatre allowed them not only to make critical mental associations but also allowed them to intervene in the theatrical space. The argument here is that their participation as spect-actors in the play 'The Eviction' can be understood not only as a fictitious desire to change their lives, but actually that their participation in the play is a representation of a real desire to contribute to social change. In reality, the peasant families of this specific MST camp did not need to confront a violent eviction, and after nearly four years of living in a camp they now have a plot of land. But the actions that took place in the realm of the theatre could be transported and adapted to future situations in Sra. Iraci's and Sr. Adão's lives.

4. The Landless Movement (MST)

In the preface to the second edition of *Games for Actors and Non-Actors* (2002), Augusto Boal introduces readers to one of his latest experiences in Brazil, the work with the Landless Movement. Instead of describing his theatrical experiences with the landless, he opens his text writing about the movement itself - their fight for land and the violence and death that the peasants are constantly exposed to. For Boal, 'Of course they [the landless] do not rely on Theatre of the Oppressed techniques to save their lives; they organize themselves in all possible ways. One tactic is to try to make the reality of their lives clear to the entire population, to gather sympathy for their cause; the newspapers and the TV stations almost never give space to them' (Boal 2002: 8).

As Boal says, the Theatre of the Oppressed cannot save the landless people's lives, but after watching the play *The Eviction* in *Rehearsing Reality*, one can begin to understand the value of this methodology and comprehend how Boal's 'art rediscovers and reinvents reality from a singular perspective: that of the artist, who is unique, as is his relationship with the real, and his way of seeing and feeling' (Boal 2006:20).

The story behind *The Eviction* was specifically based on the massacre of Eldorado dos Carajás⁵¹, where nineteen landless leaders were shot dead by the Brazilian military police in 1996. Many of the landless living in the MST road camps often face violent evictions and the participants in the Theatre of the Oppressed workshop's decided to create a play to represent the scenario of an eviction, as a way of provoking debate on how the landless should behave during similar circumstances.

The Theatre of the Oppressed is not only being used to avoid violent actions amongst the landless, the technique is also being practiced to help the landless to debate topics concerning their personal lives such as sexism, domestic violence, alcohol and drug abuse. In *Rehearsing Reality* there are a series of fragments representing performances about these topics.

⁵¹ In collaboration with Gideon Bouting, this author has edited a 13' minute documentary titled *Ashes and Dust* (1996) which has a detailed account of the massacre of Eldorado dos Carajás. The production of this documentary occurred after this author received from a Brazilian MST supporter a video with images of the massacre and a series of interviews with the MST survivors. *Ashes and Dust* has been showed in a series of public meetings organized by Development agencies in the UK.

In order to clarify questions about the nature and development of this social movement, the following text offers a brief introduction to the history and development of the MST including the decision to include culture and, more specifically, the Theatre of the Oppressed in their main agenda.

In *Rehearsing Reality*, Professor Noam Chomsky describes the Landless Movement,⁵² as 'one the most important social movements in the world.'⁵³ His comments and long standing support for the movement is related to the fact that today in Brazil there are millions of people who, in order to escape poverty and degradation, are joining a social movement which offers people the chance to become active participants in the process of social change.

The Brazilian 'landless' consists of women, men, the elderly and children from all ages and from all regions of Brazil. From the Amazon to the main urban centres, one can easily identify children or even whole families living in the streets or in the numerous shantytowns which are continuously expanding. Many of them migrate across a huge geographical area in order to find a job or a piece of land. Many others encounter the Landless Movement, whose praxis involves the transformation of the poor and oppressed into socially conscious and active participants, and offers them a new way to live their lives.

After joining the movement families still have to live in camps under very difficult circumstances and sometimes face police or hired gunmen in violent evictions. Most of them, however, are determined to wait and take part in a land occupation; their chance to take over a piece of land.

Although the land occupation represented in *Rehearsing Reality* was a peaceful one, a few months later, as it often happens, all the landless people living on that land were evicted by

⁵² The MST has already won the Vladimir Herzog National Human Rights Prize; the Chico Mendes Medal for their struggle against violence in the field; the Alternative Nobel Prize of the Swedish Parliament (1991); the Honourable Mention of the King Baldwin Prize, from Belgium (1994) and the UNICEF-Itaú Prize (1995) for its educational work with children.

⁵³ A social movement is a network of people engaged in sustained, contentious, collective action, using methods beyond established institutional procedures such as voting. (Tarrow 1998:3)

the police who forced them to return to their camp. While some land occupations end in evictions, many others have resulted in successful actions. The commitment to change the life of oppressed people in Brazil has resulted in numerous impressive achievements, but nevertheless, it is a widely held belief that the landless people of Brazil deserve more support from the Brazilian authorities and those who are committed to social change.

4.1 Emergence of the Landless Movement

The formation of the Landless Movement is directly related to the fact that Brazilian politicians have not firmly addressed the urgent question of agrarian reform in the country. The movement is a product of an agrarian situation intrinsically connected to the socio-economic structure and history of Brazil. Historically this socio-political reality has constantly prevented the possibility of reaching a political solution encompassing the rural population.

The (re) organization of landless peasants families began to take place during the late 1970s, when Brazil was still under dictatorship. The Landless Movement began to emerge as an organization in the Centre-South region of Brazil, progressively gaining strength in the struggle for land and agrarian reform. It became the backbone of the landless demands to the Brazilian government.

The Landless Movement's formal creation took place in January 1984, during the First National meeting of the Landless Rural Workers in the city of Cascável, in Paraná State. Its creation was supported by the ecumenical Pastoral Land Commission (Comissão Pastoral da Terra, CPT) and Trade Union movements. From its foundation until today, the main objectives of the movement have been: land, agrarian reform and social change in Brazil.⁵⁴

From the beginning the movement prioritized its actions as land occupations, the organization of temporary camps and the survival of their inhabitants.⁵⁵ For Fernandes, a

⁵⁴ Stedile, P. O Movimento Sem Terra p.37

⁵⁵ During its annual report on rural conflicts the Pastoral Land Commission (CPT) of the Catholic Church declared that in 2006, 39 people were killed in land conflicts in Brazil, one more than in 2005. But there were 72 attempted murders (an increase of 177 percent on 2005). Between 1985 and 2006, the period during which the CPT has monitored rural violence, there were 1,104 conflicts resulting in murders, and 1,464 rural workers were killed. However, only 85 of the

land occupation is what marks the identity of the movement. 'A land occupation is a complex socio-political process that needs to be understood as a form of peasant resistance and popular struggle. The occupation unfolds within spatial and territorial processes whenever the landless resistance experiences are created and recreated' (Fernandes 2000: 73).

In order for the movement to form roots and to create a national peasants movement, the MST leadership opted for what Fernandes describes as the 'territorialization' and 'espatialization' of the struggle for land from 1985 to 1999 (Fernandes 2000:95-198). From the South of Brazil, a group of young activist leaders moved to other regions in order to coordinate local groups of rural workers.

During the movements' expansion period, a series of cultural forms of expression, including music, poetry and the 'mistica', were emerging from the camps and settlements. The 'mistica' can be defined as a sort of 'celebration' or theatrical aesthetic, which has been part of the Landless Movement since its formation.⁵⁶ For the landless, this sort of representation reminds them of the importance of their struggle, their unity and their collective identity. During the expansion of the Landless

Movement, when the organizational structure of the movement was not yet formed and the entire movement was facing strong repression with many landless losing their lives in the struggle for land, the 'mistica' played a vital contribution in keeping the unity of the landless people.

During this period, the movement's leadership decided to focus their efforts on the survival of people amongst their new camps and settlements spread across the country. The MST leadership acknowledged that attention to a series of other topics including culture and gender were not addressed at that stage. Issues such as these were to be revisited and become part of the movement's agenda at a later stage.

cases went to court, and only 71 murderers and 19 instigators were convicted. Figures published by Pastoral Land Commission (CPT) <<http://www.ipsnews.net/news.asp?idnews=37371>> Accessed: [03-06-2007]

⁵⁶ See *Rehearsing Reality* sequence Mistica.

4.2 Conscientização

Conscientização (critical consciousness) is the main concept used by the Brazilian educationalist Paulo Freire,⁵⁷ most directly connected to his ideas of freedom, autonomy and self-affirmation. The etymology of the word *Conscientização* derives from the concept in English of 'conscience'. For Freire the transformation of a specific reality only happens through the transformation of conscience and praxis. Freire's process of liberation is related to the capacity to 'perceive the social, political and economic contradictions' within the historical situation in which the individual is located; praxis is then the action taken against the oppressive elements of this specific reality, both individually and collectively.

The landless movement thinkers always refer to Freire's concepts of *conscientização* and *praxis* in their theoretical writings and public debates. For them, the process of *conscientização* takes place when a person joins and participates in the praxis adopted by the movement. For them, participation can lead the landless to reflect about themselves and their reality, directing them towards a continuous process of change. Land occupations, organization of road camps, construction of houses and schools, participation in large scale marches and demonstrations are the main MST practical activities in which the landless take part.⁵⁸

However, it is important to remember that the road towards freedom is not as simple as it seems and *conscientização* should not be interpreted as ideological indoctrination. As Freire writes 'without leadership, discipline, determination, and objectives[...] an organization cannot survive, and revolutionary action is thereby diluted' (Freire 1970: 158). But he also alerts us to the fact that 'leaders who do not act dialogically, but insist on imposing their decisions, do not organize the people – they manipulate them. They do not liberate, nor are they liberated: they oppress (Freire 1970: 159).

⁵⁷ Paulo Freire began his method of education and *conscientização* during the 60's, amongst peasants living in the North-east of Brazil.

⁵⁸ As Fernandes points out, 'These collective actions are their main tool to fight against the political and economic power of the landowners in order to put pressure on the local and federal government for an urgent land distribution programme' (Fernandes 2000: 49).

Some of the MST thinkers are aware that in parallel to the land struggle each individual has to go through a series of stages of self-awareness and external awareness in order to become conscious and to challenge the existent models of power. Therefore along the years, the creation of a national landless identity was designed to be achieved by a series of interconnected policies.

4.3 Education

The MST educational documents, specifically the pamphlet *Principles of Education in the MST* (2000), describe the philosophical, political and educational framework that has been adopted by the Landless Movement throughout its existence. The fundamental principles of their educational system involves:

To help families break the process of dehumanisation and degradation to which they have been subjected, to make sure that they assume the identity of “Sem Terra” and not that of their old oppressors, and to encourage other sectors of society to adopt the MST values and to support their land struggle.⁵⁹



8. MST School at the Quixabeira Camp. Sergipe State -April 2003.

⁵⁹ The MST educational sector, oversees a network of 18,000 schools, with over 160,000 students. It has trained 3,900 teachers with its own pedagogical resources. These educational efforts have received five international awards. The MST has also invested significantly in training its cadre through workshops, engaging more than 100,000 movement activists in the last 18 years, and has recently established a college in the state of São Paulo. The production sector oversees the MST's 104 cooperatives and 96 agro-industrial plants. Levels of peasant cooperation within the settlements are low, however, despite the movement's efforts to instill teamwork. Carvalho, H.M. (1993) *Agricultural Settlements*. Available from: <http://www.brazil.ox.ac.uk/confreports/Conf%20Report%20-%20MST%2017.10.03.pdf> Accessed :[20 January 2004].

Most of the MST educational documents reveal that the movement follows the concept of *conscientização* and *praxis* expressed by Freire, in which theory and practice are inseparable and mutually supportive :

We cannot content ourselves with the development of the so-called “critical consciousness”, whereby people learn to discuss problems and their causes, but do not manage to go beyond that.... Our education must encourage the development of the so-called “organisational consciousness” whereby people pass from the critical to the organised action of concrete intervention in reality (MST 1999: 7).

Another important element in the process of *conscientização* is to end what Freire calls the ‘culture of silence’ in which the oppressed have been submerged throughout their lives. The MST argues that through their practices, they are challenging the landless to change their ‘culture of silence’ to a ‘culture of dialogue’. Dialogue here is more than simply the interaction of two people in conversation, it relates to a whole attitude towards human relations whereby both the leadership and the people are open to each others’ understanding and able to learn from one another.

Although the movement’s documents reveal the importance of peasant participation in debates about decisions affecting their lives, writers like Archer and Costello (1990) point to *conscientização* programmes implemented by elites of the movement, to create the appearance of change, whilst retaining existing power relations.

Based on observations of this author during the filming period in regions such as the hinterland of Sergipe State, to a certain extent Landless Movement theory does diverge from its practice. In certain camps and settlements it was observed that the leadership mainly transfer information about the struggle for land instead of engaging the landless in a constructive and critical dialogue about themselves and their social reality. In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire emphasizes that ‘leaders cannot treat the oppressed as mere activists to be denied the opportunity of reflection and allowed merely the illusion of acting, whereas in fact they would continue to be manipulated – and in this case by the presumed foes of manipulation’ (Freire 1996, 107). This practice can lead members of communities to disassociate themselves from the movement’s ideas, especially the new generation of landless who have not been part of the same historical process within the movement.

4.4 The Landless and the Hinterland of Sergipe State

The hinterland of Sergipe state, where the majority of filming took place, is characterised by profound social inequalities with all the power and wealth concentrated in the hands of a few landowning families.⁶⁰ Since the Landless Movement was organized in the region in 1985, the movement has been organizing a series of land occupations⁶¹ encouraging many other peasants to continue their struggle for land in the region.

Although community developments are directly linked to the participation of each individual, the influence of the economic, political and environmental reality of this region also affects the internal development of the camps and settlements.

As seen in *Rehearsing Reality*, landless camps are deprived of all sorts of amenities with one of the main challenges being access to fresh, clean water. The vast periods of drought combined with a politically corrupt system that controls the water supply to most of the hinterland area continues to stifle development in this region.

This situation generates anxiety amongst the landless, forcing many individual members of families to work for local farmers or local businesses in order to survive. At the community level there exists another problem, which is that the landless teenagers who live in the road camps and settlements are attracted to the prospect of living in a big city. On the same point, Branford & Rocha (2002) state that currently

The second generation of Sem-terra, (landless) brought up on the settlements, has not experienced the extreme poverty, humiliation and despair that drove their parents to risk all in a dangerous land occupation. Young people do not identify with the “Culture of resistance” and it is not uncommon to hear them say: “The Landless Movement, that’s my parent’s movement, not mine (Branford and Rocha 2001: 256).

As emphasised in Ademar Bogo *O Arquiteto dos Sonhos* (The Architect of Dreams 2003) specifically referring to teenagers, ‘there exists a great empty space, because the sons and daughters of the landless practically become property tutored by their parents. They live

⁶⁰ The social contradictions and the conflict between peasant and landowner are also illustrated in a series of Brazilian films including Glauber Rocha’s film, *Black God, White Devil* (*Deus e o Diabo na Terra do Sol* 1963).

⁶¹ See MST website www.mst.org.br

from the family rent without any autonomy. As they lack paid work, adequate leisure or satisfactory studying conditions, they leave the settlements behind and depart for the cities in order to build their existence with new customs and values' (Bogo 2003:243).

For Zander Navarro, there is a 'second generation of militants' coming out of the landless schools. For him, as these militants come from all Brazilian states and represent different 'agrarian realities' they are 'much more open to radical interpretations that reflect their own life experiences.' Navarro affirms that this new attitude has led the movement into a 'movement of militants instead of a 'mass movement', as was the church's initial inspiration...' This new reality presents another problem within the movement, currently there are signs of internal conflicts in which 'the militarist ethos and near religious devotion of some of its intermediate militants, led by a few main national leaders, might no longer be able to control the camps, and, especially the settlements.' ⁶²

In the hinterland of Sergipe State, issues concerning power relations and gender should be urgently addressed by the MST. Most of their coordinators or local leaders are men and although some women participate at leadership level the decision-making process invariably falls to males.

While observing the movements' camps and settlements in the hinterland region, it became clear that the most common cultural activities organized spontaneously by the landless during weekends or evenings are a football match or a party. Some families will also attend a mass, although there is a shortage of catholic priests working in that area. As Letícia Barqueta from the MST Culture Sector stresses, 'Most of the MST members living on MST settlements rarely have any contact with cultural activities and in most settlements people spend most of their time working on their plantations and watching television.' ⁶³

In the face of some of the criticism quoted above throughout the nineties the MST thinkers adopted political lines which brought new life to the movement by incorporating culture as part of its political agenda. The rescue of community life and the strength of the

⁶² Navarro, Z. (1996) *Mobilização sem emancipação* - as lutas sociais dos sem-terra no Brasil. Available: <http://www.iisg.nl/labouragain/documents/navarro.pdf> Accessed: [05-04-2003]

⁶³ Author interview. [São Paulo, 03 November 2001].

movement's identity have become vital elements in the reorganization of the camps and settlements and in the engagement of new members.

4.5 The MST Cultural Revolution

Throughout the 1990s the Landless Movement began to widen its organizational structure and culture along with other sectors,⁶⁴ thus adding another dimension to the fight for land. During that period a series of artistic expressions took place in the MST camps and settlements, and as a consequence the movement considered forming a landless cultural identity as an important measure in organizing all these cultural experiences. This new cultural discourse was specifically encouraged by a group of the Landless who were also cultural activists and who had begun to organize themselves by creating the Landless Movement Musicians Collective.

The provision of a framework for cultural politics, which would later translate into other cultural fields, came in the form of a project proposal for 'Musical Formation and Training in the Camps and Settlements'. Apart from recognizing the fundamental role of musical production amongst the Landless, the main emphasis of the project was to organize and distribute it amongst their camps and settlements. A vital necessity for the Landless Movement was to create its own means of cultural communication and to promote music that 'portrays the hard reality of the working class.

Further discussions about the cultural and communication policies/politics amongst the movement took place during the second national meeting of the Musicians' Collective held in Brasilia in August 1997. This event, which involved the movement's artists, other outside professionals and Brazilian academics focused on three main areas: the production of the movement's cultural manifestations, ways of organization, and how to encourage the landless from road camps and settlements to actively participate in the production of cultural manifestations. The discussions focused on the importance of theatrical productions, radio programs and the means of communication amongst the landless communities (McNee 2003).

⁶⁴ According to Fernandes, during the 1990s the MST had the following sectors: Education, Political Formation (Formacao Política) Health, Mass Front (Frente de Massas) Cooperativist System of the Settled (Sistema Cooperativista dos Assentados), Communication, Projects, Finance, Human Rights, Women, and International Relations.

The movement 'Culture Collective' was born out of this meeting and since then it has been responsible for developing all aspects of artistic and cultural production amongst the landless, including a series of cultural and artistic projects in partnership with other Brazilian educational and artistic institutions. These projects are all carried out in connection with the cultural, educational and communication sectors of the movement. They involve music, theatre, *mística*⁶⁵, literature, poetry, mural painting and visual arts.

McNee argues that the Landless Movement's cultural and artistic philosophy is inspired by other historical Brazilian cultural and artistic movements, from the period between 1922 to 1970, including: the modernist movements (1920s), the Centres of Popular Culture, Cinema Novo (1960s), *Tropicália* and *Armorial* (1970s). (McNee 2003: 21-80). Concurrent with the development of the Landless Movement's cultural and artistic philosophy other external factors have contributed to accelerating the progress of its cultural and artistic projects.

After the Massacre of Eldorado dos Carajás, a series of cultural and artistic manifestations began to take place. A day after the massacre members of the Landless Movement organized a series of synchronized protests in many parts of Brazil. The images of the massacre and the Landless Movement's national protests were broadcast on all Brazilian TV channels calling attention not only to the high level of organization of the movement but also to the oppression and the high level of violence peasants are exposed to in the countryside.

After this event, and although other landless activists and supporters had previously lost their lives, April 17th became a memorable date for the MST. It became the International day of Agrarian Reform, and since then, every year in April the movement carries out a series of protests and land occupations to pay homage to all those who have died in the land conflict and also to press the government to speed up the process of agrarian reform.

Since the massacre, a series of artists from Brazil and abroad continue to produce a number of artistic works in solidarity with the movement. A year after the massacre, the architect

⁶⁵ See definition of *mística* in Glossary and page 114.

Oscar Niemeyer designed the monument entitled Eldorado dos Carajás which was inaugurated at the location where the massacre took place. The monument was also reproduced as an art work and the money collected was donated to the movement.

The book *Terra: Struggle of the Landless* (1997) and the *Terra* exhibition⁶⁶ by Sebastião Salgado, was the result of a photographic project created to show the reality of Brazilian landless people before and after joining the Landless Movement. Salgado's pictures also reveal the story of the Eldorado dos Carajás massacre. Salgado's book and photographic exhibition became an important visual documentation within Landless Movement history.

TV Globo also produced a soap opera entitled 'O Rei do Gado' (The Cattle King) two months after the massacre. Although it presented a somewhat patronizing view of the landless, by showing their struggle with a landowner in its storyline it contributed to raising awareness of the social reality of peasants living in the Brazilian countryside.⁶⁷ By April 1997, opinion polls showed that 94% of the Brazilian population felt that the Landless Movement struggle for land reform was just, and 85% indicated their support for non-violent land occupations as a way to accelerate government reform efforts.

Another important event that was established one year after the massacre⁶⁸ was the first Landless National March entitled: 'Reforma Agrária, Emprego e Justiça' (Agrarian Reform, Work and Justice),⁶⁹ in which the landless also demanded punishment for all those responsible for the massacre. For sixty days, three landless groups from three different parts of the country walked towards the capital Brasília. The marchers arrived at the capital on the 17th April 1997, one year after the massacre. On the day of their arrival, there were more than sixty thousand people waiting to join them on the streets. A demonstration was organized after their arrival that included several politicians such as Luis Inácio Lula da

⁶⁶ Terra exhibition has travelled 170 Brazilian cities and been exhibited in many parts of the world.

⁶⁷ These figures are from Ibope, one of Brazil's leading polling firms, published by O Estado de São Paulo, on April 16th 1997.

⁶⁸ Fernandes, B.M. *A Formação do MST no Brasil*, p. 254

⁶⁹ In 1997, this author produced and directed *March for Land* a documentary about the MST first National March and the internal structure of the MST.

Silva, the current Brazilian President, who promised that if ever elected, agrarian reform would be his main priority.⁷⁰

In 1999, the Welsh cultural activist Dan Baron Cohen, in conjunction with the same landless community who were present at the massacre, produced a 'Escultura Comunitária' entitled "As Castanheiras de Eldorado dos Carajás". Cohen, for years has been collaborating with artistic projects amongst the MST communities located in the South and North of the country.

At the time, the artistic representations and the cultural manifestations taking place amongst many of the movement's camps and settlements created an inevitable momentum amongst the movement. More than ever, culture and the arts began to be seen as important tools for education and *concientização*.⁷¹

From the middle 1990s onwards, a series of debates at a national level encouraged by the movement inspired the Culture Collective to reflect about other forms of cultural production within the MST. Amongst these cultural productions stands out the first MST National Cultural Week Conference organized in April 2002, supported by the State University of Rio de Janeiro. This event united MST thinkers, artists including Boal and other outside professionals in a series of debates on culture. During his talk, Boal emphasized the importance of using art as a way to debate personal and political problems.

The movement's Culture Collective has, since the late 1990s, been developing a series of cultural and artistic projects⁷² (including the partnership with the Centre of the Theatre of the Oppressed) in partnership with Brazilian educational and artistic institutions, in order to encourage landless people to actively participate in new cultural projects.

⁷⁰ Currently in his second term, President Lula is facing serious criticisms by the MST regarding his social policies and regarding agrarian reform, no radical changes have taken place in the country.

⁷¹ See definition of *concientização* in Glossary and page 100.

⁷² <http://www.landless-voices.org/>

4.6 Interventions by the Theatre of the Oppressed

The first time Boal was invited to discuss and introduce the Theatre of the Oppressed methods to a group of cultural activists, representing the Landless Movement at a national level, was during the Third Workshop of Arts and Communication produced by the movement in 2000.

For Boal, forty years had passed since the cathartic experience with the peasant Virgílio, who saw no difference between theatre and reality. At this time, with no actors on the stage, Boal presented a theatrical method very different from the didactic theatre he had produced during the early 1960s. His main focus was to introduce Forum Theatre and his concept of the 'spect-actor' to all the participants.

This encounter resulted in a partnership between the Landless Movement and the Centre of the Theatre of the Oppressed, which started in February 2001 in Rio de Janeiro. After this first workshop, the landless cultural activists returned to their regions and gradually experiences began to take place in some of the movements' camps and settlements.

According to Villas Boas, a Landless Movement cultural activist, 'independent theatrical experiences have somehow contributed to awaken an interest for theatre, together with the understanding that theatrical language can play a role of critical reflection and conscious formation.' He stresses the fact that theatre gains have been forced through the collaboration established between the Landless Movement and the Centre for the Theatre of the Oppressed⁷³. The main relationship between Boal's methodology and the landless is that his art has allowed some aspects of the social lives of the landless to be exposed and debated on stage.

After the first analysis of these theatrical experiences, the group participating in Boal's workshops had decided to form the official MST theatre collective entitled *Brigada*

⁷³ Villas Boas, R. (2006) *Sem Terra Identificam sua Lutas em experiências teatrais do MST*. Available: <http://www.mst.org.br/mst/pagina.php?cd=1500> Accessed: [12-08-2006]

*Nacional de Teatro Patativa do Assaré*⁷⁴ or National Brigade of the Theatre Patativa do Assaré (PATB),⁷⁵ in June 2001. During this period, the main participants of the Brigade were MST supporters, including students and land activists from different parts of the country. The main proposal of this Brigade was to coordinate the theatrical experiences taking place at the national level. In order to launch the new Theatre Brigade, a collectively authored manifesto was created stating that theatrical groups should be formed to denounce oppression and that art and politics should educate, mobilize and transform people.

According to Villas Bôas, after the creation of this Brigade a fast expansion of the Theatre of the Oppressed methods was observed, and in a short period various groups developed the conditions to prepare theatre pieces. This development had the knock-on effect of creating spaces for debates about subjects such as racism, gender and power relations.

Theatre of the Oppressed methods, especially Forum Theatre, began to be practiced in some of the MST camps and settlements, and were further applied in political courses developed by the movement. It is important to note that between 2002 and 2004 the number of Theatre of the Oppressed experiences amongst the camps and settlements of the Landless Movement has greatly varied from region to region. This has depended to a large extent on the availability of cultural activists to develop Theatre of the Oppressed activities in different camps and settlements. One of the decisions of the theatre Brigade was that the Theatre of the Oppressed experiences should be adapted to the reality of the MST and it should reinforce the importance of landless culture.

One of the first decisions was to document the theatrical experiences taking place around the country. Therefore, all the coordinators of the Theatre of the Oppressed workshops taking place in camps and settlements were required to send a report of their activities, including the plays written by the participants of the workshops, to the Brigade coordinators.

⁷⁴ Patativa do Assaré was one of Brazil's main popular poets.

⁷⁵ The Patativa do Assaré Brigade follows the same internal structure of other MST brigades, it is formed of a coordination and work centre points.

Another important decision by the Brigade is that some of these theatrical experiences should also be presented in other instances of the movement, like for example, during the MST National and regional meetings and also during their protests and national marches. In that way these theatrical experiences could be shared amongst other landless from different parts of the country.⁷⁶

It was observed during the filming of Theatre of the Oppressed workshops that this theatrical methodology was always welcomed by all the workshop participants, both children, teenagers and adults. It can be affirmed that one of the main reasons for this positive reaction towards the Theatre of the Oppressed workshop is the fact that all participants can take part in all aspects of the workshops. They practice exercises, games, talk about their lives, about their dreams, and also help to decide what are the most important and urgent topics taking place in their communities. Also, Boal's methodology seems not to conflict with local culture and does not impose any restrictions on it. Based on this fact it could be affirmed that Boal's method adds an artistic dimension to the structure of the movement. Although in some regions of the country, prior to Boal, other localized theatrical experiences had already occurred, in most of the settlements and camps visited in Sergipe state the Theatre of the Oppressed had been so far their only contact with theatre. The distant areas in which these settlements and camps are located are the main reason for this scenario.

Between 2001 and 2004, the members of the *Brigade Patativa do Assaré* had sporadic encounters with representatives of the Centre of the Theatre of the Oppressed,⁷⁷ attending Boal's workshops for at least one week each year.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ It is important to note that the partnership with the Centre of the Theatre of the Oppressed does not represent the only MST theatrical experiences. Even prior to Boal there was already some isolated theatrical experiences taking place in some of the MST camps and settlements. (McNee 2001)

⁷⁷ When questioning Boal about the infrequent meetings between the Centre of the Theatre of the Oppressed and members of the Patativa do Assaré Theatre the main answer was that neither the Centre of the Theatre of the Oppressed or the MST had the financial support to develop this project. Boal and all his artistic directors involved in the partnership were developing this project on a voluntary basis.

⁷⁸ The Theatre of the Oppressed experiences and the methodology of the Patativa do Assaré Theatre Brigade are described in the MST Caderno das Artes N.1 Teatro. São Paulo: Anca, 2005.

When looking at the dissemination of the Theatre of the Oppressed experiences at the MST national level, it can be affirmed that this practice has occurred more frequently in regions where the coordinators of the Theatre of the Oppressed workshops had more availability to work. During the filming period, the states of Sergipe and Brasilia had been open to these experiences, due to the fact that both MST cultural activists were dedicating quite a lot of time to the development of theatrical experiences amongst the MST camps and settlements.

From 2004 onwards a series of other theatrical groups began to emerge amongst the MST, but it seems that the cultural activists were mainly exploring methods which mainly contribute to the debate of the landless political situation, rather than including topics on the personal. It is important to note that at this stage many landless people still show strong resistance to debate issues related to gender, alcohol abuse, drugs and religion. If Forum Theatre could be systematically practiced amongst the landless communities, perhaps local people would find new ways to resolve some difficult situations faced daily in their communities.

4.7 Conclusion

This chapter presented an overview of Brazil's Landless Movement and their difficult task to transform the lives of Brazil's poor landless families, who throughout history have been denied the chance to take part in the process of development of the country. We also saw that the MST has designed a national program of education, which includes a political educational program, literacy campaigns and a wide range of cultural activities and policies designed to enable them not only to receive educational benefits but also to transform themselves as subjects of cultural creation.

The partnership with the Centre of the Theatre of the Oppressed has been introduced as one of the MST's attempts to help to transform the lives of the landless, by involving them in a process of critical dialogue about their existence and the politics surrounding their lives. As seen in *Rehearsing Reality*, Boal's methodology offers people the means of cultural creation, from being passive observers, they are offered the opportunity to become

active participants of the theatre, liberating their imagination and creativity in order to construct images of their reality and desires.

The main force behind the landless identity remains the aspiration for agrarian reform, freedom and autonomy. However, the experiences of the Theatre of the Oppressed amongst the MST camps and settlements can be seen to contribute towards people's education, critical thinking and possibly some level of transformation.

The Theatre of the Oppressed practice amongst the MST camps and settlements in Sergipe state, during the years of 2001 and 2004, can be said to occur on a small scale. This situation has come into being because most of the MST cultural activists were involved in many of the MST local and national actions and were unable to dedicate themselves entirely to the practices of the Theatre of the Oppressed. Perhaps, this situation will change if some political and economic developments take place in the country.

In 2005, the Brazilian government has created a project entitled *Pontos de Cultura* (culture hotspots). A grassroots programme aimed to support communities to develop their artistic productions. The MST has benefited with 16 different culture hotspots in various parts of Brazil, one of them is located at the Quissamã settlement in Sergipe State, where some of this research took place. Hopefully, the MST cultural activists will be able benefit of this space, and continue to offer further Theatre of the Oppressed workshops to the landless people.

5. Interrupting the System

‘Interruption is one of the fundamental devices of all structuring. It goes far beyond the sphere of art’ (Benjamin 1968: 151).

In the chapter, from which this quote by Walter Benjamin comes, he compares the interruptions, which take place in Bertold Brecht’s *Epic Theatre*, to the interruptions taking place when we are engaged in the process of writing. Benjamin refers to an essential point resonating throughout the oeuvre of the German playwright: ‘To quote a text involves the interruption of its context’ (Benjamin 1968: 151) From the emphasis placed on that interrupting device evolves the basic format and main intention behind Brecht’s theatre: producing a shock rather than provoking empathy amongst spectators. Instead of following the expected path of allowing the audience to identify with the main characters, Brecht explores the idea that they ‘should be educated to be astonished at the circumstances under which they function.’ (Benjamin 1968: 150)

John Willett reminds us that the word ‘epic’ ‘is an Aristotelian term for a form of narrative that is not tied to time’. (Willett 1977:168) He then defines Brecht’s *Epic Theatre* as ‘a sequence of incidents or events, narrated without artificial restrictions as to time, place or relevance to a formal plot’ (Willett 1977:169).

By involving elements like captions, songs, signs and placards, *Epic Theatre* produces a series of ‘intervals which, if anything, impair the illusion of the audience and paralyse its readiness for empathy’ an essentially emotional dramatic element regarded as the main component of Aristotelian theatre (Willett 1977:153). These intervals ‘are reserved for the spectators critical reaction – to the actions of the players and to the way in which they are presented’. At this stage it is important to remember that these critical reactions are meant to take place in Brecht’s productions but the audience remains physically passive. Unlike the theatre of Augusto Boal, in Brecht’s theatrical formats spectators are still unable to become true participants of the aesthetic scenario.

Amongst the main findings included within this thesis and captured through the video documentation shot in Brazil, the elements of interruption, interaction and dialogue are identified as essential concepts in Forum Theatre. This process of crossing the invisible

fourth wall, allows the spectators to go further than the 'critical reactions' produced by the *Epic Theatre*.

In *Forum Theatre*, anyone, at any point, can stop the play and interact with the stage in order to offer a different solution to the problem presented, although it is important to stress that these interactions do not frequently happen spontaneously. As seen in *Rehearsing Reality*, they also are encouraged by the figure of the Joker.

In terms of narrative, Boal's methodology 'disrupts' the traditional monologues that exist between the audience and the stage by allowing them to critically 'intervene' and physically 'interact' in the aesthetic experience of the theatre.

The main aspect of *Forum Theatre* 'is not to offer solutions', this is supported by Diamond who notes 'The more it does this, the more it robs the audience of its interactive role'.⁷⁹ The creation and re-creation of a new scene is considered by Boal as a way to rehearse, analyse, plan and act their future actions. (Boal 1992: 231) Also his theatre offers people the chance to continuously experiment with their ideas, to develop their imagination and to perform their desires.

It could be affirmed that the open nature of Forum Theatre has similarities with the poetics of the *Open Work* (1989) of Umberto Eco. For the Italian philosopher and semiotician, a work is 'open' in the same sense that a debate is 'open' (Eco 1989: 62). The main objective of the open work 'is the creation of new discursive structures that will remain open to all sorts of possible conclusions' (Eco 1989: 64).

The characteristics of the *Open Work* are based on order, disorder, rupture and discontinuity. Eco does not announce the end of form; rather, he suggests a new, more flexible version of it – form as a web of possibilities (Eco 1989: 103). Eco emphasizes that

The open work assumes the task of giving us an image of discontinuity. It does not narrate it; it *is* it. It takes on a mediating role between the abstract categories of

⁷⁹ Diamond, D. Creating Community Based Dialogue <http://www.headlinestheatre.com/rockefeller-set.htm> (Accessed 25 April 2003)

science and the living matter of our sensibility; it almost becomes a sort of transcendental scheme that allow us to comprehend new aspects of the world (Eco 1989: 90).

In that sense, Eco and Boal share the same principle, a desire that art provokes an action and reaction. For both of them, the disordered presentation of signs, and the disintegration of formal structures can provoke the spectator to make new connections, resulting in an interactive process - a dialogue between spectator and work.

As previously mentioned, the current art world and new technological developments are encouraging many artists to discuss and experiment with the concept of discontinuity, openness and spectator's participation – interaction.

In the case of this thesis, the intention behind the production of a non-linear, fragmented and interactive documentary is related to a central factor: Forum Theatre and its practices with the MST do not correspond to a linear or structured order. Creating a linear narrative documentary for passive spectators would serve little purpose; at best it would offer an erroneous impression, and at worst it would confuse.

The actual application of new media, especially the interruptions caused by the structure of the film, is part of an exploratory idea to activate the viewer to enter a meaningful dialogue with the work. Therefore, as much as revealing significant aspects of the subject researched, *Rehearsing Reality* also contributes to another debate – the interactive debate.

5.1 New Media, New Methods, New Readings⁸⁰

When looking for answers on how to apply interaction and which type of interactivity to apply in new technologies, Brenda Laurel offered an interesting perspective in her *Computers as Theatre* (1991). In her book, Laurel suggests ‘ways in which we can use a notion of theatre, not simply as a metaphor but as a way to conceptualize human-computer interaction itself’ (Laurel 1991: 20). For Laurel, ‘Both theatre and human-computer activity design are collaborative disciplines; both depend upon a variety of artistic and technical contributions’ (Laurel 1991: 48).

Laurel reminds us of a series of artists who have experimented with theatrical formats where the limits between actors and audience were dissolved. Amongst them she mentions, Judith Melina and Julian Beck of the Living Theatre, Roberto Wilson, Peter Brook, Jerzy Grotowski and John Cage (Laurel 1991: 52). Although Augusto Boal, one of the leading names on interactive theatre, curiously is not mentioned either in her list or in her book, Laurel has adopted a similar language to Boal’s when comparing computer users to theatre audiences. She describes computer users as ‘audience members who are able to have a greater influence on the unfolding action than simply the fine-tuning provided by conventional audience response’ (Laurel 1991: 16), also remarking that ‘it’s not that the audience joins the actors on the stage; it’s that they *become* actors – and the notion of “passive” observers disappears’ (Laurel 1991:17). Conscious of Boal’s rules of theatre or not, Laurel’s clear concern is that computers can represent ‘actions in which humans could participate’ (Laurel 1991:1).

For Laurel, ‘interactivity’ “is regard as the unique cultural discovery of the electronic age,” (Laurel 1991:53) but even so, there is still very little understanding of what it may be, or how far we are going to go with the experiments and discussions about it.

Interactivity, one of the essential components of Forum Theatre, ‘allows and encourages total creativity’ for the “spect-actors” (Boal 1995:20). The concept of ‘interactive movies’

⁸⁰ Janet H. Murray points to the fact that ‘like the medium of film 100 years earlier, the computer medium is drawing on many antecedents and spawning a variety of formats. But the term “new media” is a sign of our current confusion about where these efforts are leading and our breathlessness at the pace of change, particularly in the last two decades of the 20th century.’ (Murray, J. *Inventing the Medium* in: Noah Wardrip-Fruin & Nick Montfort: 2003: 3)

became fashionable only during the 1980s along with more powerful computers for consumers.⁸¹ Its roots are 'in both cinema and computer games, two forms that combine theatre and technology' (Laurel 1991: 53).

Interactivity is today one of the most widely used terms in literature concerning New Media. Boal techniques are encouraging computer scientists to investigate new ways to apply theatre and technology. As Noah Wardrip-Fruin remarks 'When considering Boal from a new media perspective, it is important not to lose sight of how much interactive techniques emphasize embodiment' (Wardrip-Fruin & Montfort 2003:339). Based on Boal's Theatre techniques, Wardrip-Fruin emphasises that Boal's techniques 'are undoubtedly effective in many situations for creating embodied interaction' (Wardrip-Fruin & Montfort 2003:339). The main question Wardrip-Fruin suggests to be investigated is 'whether Boal's techniques for overcoming the spectator/actor divide can be used in new media contexts' (Wardrip-Fruin & Montfort 2003:339)

In his PhD thesis *VideoGames of the Oppressed*⁸² – *VideoGames As A Means For Critical Thinking and Debate*, Gonzalo Frasca has adapted the basic elements of the work of drama theorist Augusto Boal into videogame design. (Frasca 2001). Alice Mello Carvalho is currently developing an application called Virtual Forum Theatre,⁸³ combining computer technology with the Boal techniques. By adapting the Forum Theatre Language to the world of new media the interactive *docufragmentary Rehearsing Reality* has also been created as a way to contribute to the debate of the division between 'spectator/actor.'

For Manovich,

When we use the concept of "interactive media" exclusively in relation to computer-based media, there is the danger that we will interpret "interaction" literally, equating it with physical interaction between a user and a media object (pressing a button, choosing a link, moving the body), at the expense of psychological interaction. The psychological process of filling-in, hypothesis

⁸¹ The notion that computer interactive art has its origins in new art forms of the 1960s is explored in Söke Dinkla, 'The History of the Interface in Interactive Art,' ISEA (International Symposium on Eletronic Art) 1994 Proceedings (http://www.uiah.fi/bookshop/isea_proc/nextgen/08.html); 'From Participation to Interaction: Toward the Origins of Interactive Art,' in Lynn Hershman Leeson, ed., *Clicking In: Hot Links to a Digital Culture* (Seattle:Bay Press, 1996), 279-290. See also Simon Penny, 'Consumer Culture and the Technological Imperative: The Artist in Dataspace,' in Simon Penny, ed., *Critical Issues in Eletronic Media* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993, 47-74. Cited in Language of New Media 57).

⁸²See <http://www.ludology.org/articles/thesis/>

⁸³See <http://web.media.mit.edu/~mello/>

formation, recall, and identification, which are required for us to comprehend any text or image at all, are mistakenly identified with an objectively existing structure of interactive links (Manovich 2001: 57).

In her PhD dissertation *Applying Narrative Theory to the Design of Digital Interactive Narratives with the Aim of Understanding and Enhancing Participant Engagement*, Ella Tallyn (2000) describes interactive narrative as ‘the reciprocal effect existing between a human and an authored digital system which generates a linked set of events predetermined at some level by the digital system. The linked set of events can be generated, i.e. produced in real time, so long as there is an element of predetermination, which enables an author to communicate a specific story’ (Ella 2000).

The semiotic approach offered by Peter Bøgh Anderson describes interactivity as [...] a work where the reader can physically change the discourse in a way that is interpretable and produces meaning within the discourse itself’ (Aarseth 1997: 49).

Laurel describes experiences with interactivity as a ‘thresholdy phenomenon’ and also as ‘highly context-dependent’. She points to the fact that ‘the search for a definition, diverts attention from the real issue: how can people participate as agents within representational contexts?’ (Laurel1991:21). Laurel stresses that ‘cultural conventions of theatre, film and narrative, are the most profound and intimate sources of knowledge about interactive representations therefore these resources should be brought together in the design of interactive systems’ (Laurel 1991:21).

Although the term interactivity is being described according to different contexts and environments, a single definition has yet to be found, but it seems that what computer scientists are trying to achieve is finding ways to destroy the invisible barrier existing between spectators and the screen.

New and more complex ways to diminish the barrier between spectators and screen are currently being explored by many filmmakers. Amongst these experiments there exists the emergence of new and more complex narrative techniques, which are altering the classical

codes of story structure. Instead of constructing a linear story with a beginning, a middle and end, filmmakers are now experimenting with interactive database narratives.⁸⁴

5.2 Korsakow System

Throughout the search to develop a nonlinear interactive documentary, the Korsakow System appeared to be a good to the development of Rehearsing Reality.

Korsakow System was developed in 2000 by German artist Florian Thalhofer, who describes it as an software to create database narratives. The first Korsakow film project by Thalhofer was entitled *The Korsakow Syndrome*. The term Korsakow is used to describe a serious damage of short time memory, typical of very heavy alcohol abusers. Korsakow syndrome patients often compensate their lack of memory with an outstanding story telling talent, hence the name Korsakow System.

The System runs with a database structure in the background enabling authors (not spectators) to define and create nonlinear narratives. The program facilitates different points of view on the same topic parallel to each other.

In March 2003, The Korsakow-Foundation was founded in Amsterdam and since then, a series of 'Interactive Film Lab' workshops have been organized in Amsterdam and throughout wider Europe. After attending one of these workshops, and experimenting with the system, this author made the decision that Korsakow could be applied to the video project that forms the heart of this thesis.

⁸⁴ See works of Peter Greenaway . *The Tulse Luper Suitcases* (2003), Florian Thalhofer, *7sons* (2003). Chris Marker, *Immunity I* (1997) and Brian Eno, *77 Million Paintings* (2007).

5.3 The System Limitations

The Korsakow System offers filmmakers the possibility of creating a very different sort of film, but at the same time it presents its own limitations.⁸⁵ For example, while watching a Korsakow project, the user can only make a selection from the navigation bar located underneath of the main screen, otherwise they will not be able to see the film.

Until now, all film projects have to use the same screen interface. Authors can choose different film screen dimensions and while one movie is playing in the main screen, links will appear on the navigation bar, offering the user the chance to follow any of them. By clicking in one of the links, the user can access different sequences.

One of the main restrictions of Korsakow System DVD format, is related to the stop motion mode. If the user wants to stop the film, or if the computer crashes, one would have to watch the film all over again until the desired sequence or frame is found. The option to go directly to the last point a viewer reached in the film has been developed for the Korsakow System Internet version, however this option does not yet exist in the DVD version of the software.

In the case of *Rehearsing Reality* the subtitles became one of the main problems still to be resolved. The programme does not allow you to type international accents easily. Hopefully this matter will be resolved on the next new versions of the programme.

5.4 A Non-linear Narrative

For Manovich, the database structure used in films 'represents the world as a list of items and it refuses to order this list. In contrast, a narrative creates a cause-and-effect trajectory of seemingly unordered items (events). Therefore, database and narrative are natural enemies' (Manovich 2001:225).

⁸⁵ Creativity arises out of the tension between spontaneity and limitations, the latter (like river banks) forcing the spontaneity into the various forms which are essential to the work of art...The significance of limits in art is seen most clearly when we consider the question of form. Form provides the essential boundaries and structure for the creative act.' (Written by psychologist Rollo May in the *Courage to Create*, May, 1975) Cited in Laurel 1991:101).

In the world of New Media, researchers are also examining interactivity dimensions in order to expand the user's level of control. Perhaps the crucial element in interactivity should be the creation of a total open-ended environment, pushing the whole notion of participation into another realm.⁸⁶

However, what processes happen within our minds when interactions or interruptions take place on interface operations? When we are involved in a flow experience, we become totally absorbed by this activity process. So if we are totally absorbed and an interruption takes place, it will throw us immediately into the real world of emotions, removing us from the experience of the represented world. Laurel states that 'this interruption of the flow occurs even beyond the narrative world, highlighted when she refers to user interface and operating systems: Instructions, error messages, or dialogue boxes [...] are almost always destructive of our engagement in the activity by forcing us to "pop out" of the mimetic context into a metacontext of interface operations' (Laurel 1991:24). Interruption and non-linear narrative are fundamental elements of *Rehearsing Reality* encountered throughout the entire film. Through experiencing this interruption the viewer becomes activated and interconnected with the work.

5.5 Making an Interactive *Docufragmentary*

Rehearsing Reality can be seen as an experimental work. It is formed from a series of sequences that vary in length and approach including elements of space, time, music, silence, interviews and clashing views. Its film structure relates to how the filming process took place - different people and places were filmed at different times not following a specific chronological order.

The interruptions have not been designed purely for the sake of interaction. Instead, it has been created to reveal to the active viewer the main radical elements of Boal's technique: rupture of structure, interaction of 'spect-actors', constant dialogue and interpretation and the making and remaking of scenes. By experiencing a constant process of disruption, the active viewer encounters a series of fragmented sequences interconnected to each other. Its fragmented structure, termed within this thesis as *docufragmentary*, moves away from the

⁸⁶ See Polaine Andrew, *The Flow Principle of Interactivity* <http://portal.acm.org/citation.cfm?id=1109204>

conventional documentary format and provides a multiplicity of meanings for which the audience must hunt and find.

Rehearsing Reality does not provide a unique 'answer' or 'truth'. It raises questions therefore all conclusions are there to be made by the active viewer. All the intervals between each sequence of the film create a space for the active viewer to reflect and to make connections to questions related to human existence and processes of oppression.

5.5.1 The Structure of *Rehearsing Reality*

The interactive *docufragmentary Rehearsing Reality* is formed by three main areas which comprise a total of twenty sequences:



5.5.2 The Navigation Bar

The 'Introduction' is the only sequence of the *docufragmentary* in which the user will not need to click on the navigation bar. All the other sequences are activated by it.



The navigation bar is a fixed area located underneath the main screen. The majority of navigation bars created in previous documentaries created with Korsakow System consist of words only. However, for the making of this work, a decision was taken not to follow this route because words used in this manner can be too predictable, limiting the creative possibilities offered by this system. In addition, as *Rehearsing Reality* is aimed at being accessible to even illiterate viewers, its aesthetics offer the option of not making any type of audience/participant feel excluded from the process of navigation. The navigation bar of *Rehearsing Reality* has been created with images related to the film itself.

Each one of these chosen images represents a key moment of the sequence/chapter created. Each image displayed in the navigation bar has been carefully manipulated in Photoshop in order to mark out aesthetic differences from the original frames.

The key aim of *Rehearsing Reality* is to investigate and introduce users to the main rules and practices of Forum Theatre. The film structure was created based on two plays: *The Eviction* and *The Promise*, considered to be the main elements of the work. Before being added to the Korsakov System, both plays were edited following their own narratives. Once both plays have been introduced into the Korsakow System, the language of Forum Theatre has been adapted to it, meaning that each time there is an interruption in the real play, an interruption take place in the main narrative of the film. These interruptions were

also created in order to highlight other sequences that can be discovered by the active viewer. This fragmented structure was created according to the general pattern of the work.

During the second stage of editing, the interviews were selected. They were cut and distributed amongst the seventeen sequences mentioned above. Each one of them has been carefully edited in order to question specific issues related to the Theatre of the Oppressed, Forum Theatre and the Landless Movement.

In order to see *Rehearsing Reality*, users have first to click on the interface design appearing on the front page. This interface design is the same as the navigation bar encountered a few minutes later into the film.

The navigation bar keeps the viewer inside the main structure of the *docufragmentary*. It consists of three different hidden areas defined in Korsakow System language as ‘clouds’.

In *Rehearsing Reality*, each cloud has a fixed position in the navigation bar and has been programmed specifically with the names of the main subjects studied in this thesis: ‘Theatre of the Oppressed’, ‘Landless Movement’ and ‘Plays’. On the navigation bar, all the sequences located on the left and centre of the navigation bar appear randomly.

After watching the ‘Introduction’, the screen freezes and the navigation bar appears offering two choices, Act 1 or Act 2. After clicking on each one of these plays, the user encounters a series of freeze frames followed by a sound which interrupts the linear sequence of the film. These interruptions coincide precisely with the moment of interactions taking place in Forum Theatre.

Once the freeze frame and sound are activated, a navigation bar appears below the main screen. The active viewer is then offered three choices. By clicking on the left side of the navigation bar, they can access the sequences related to the ‘Landless Movement’; by clicking on the middle, all the sequences related to the ‘Theatre of the Oppressed’ and on the right side of it, they will find a link which will always take them back to the moment where the play has been interrupted. Each time the active viewer accesses this feature, they

will return to the play, five seconds before the moment of the freeze frame. This feature has been especially created to refresh the memory of the active viewer as a type of engagement tool, offering them the opportunity to recognize a previously watched set of images, instead of abruptly going into a new set of images with no connection attached to them.

Although at first sight, the user may become confused for not receiving obvious information signs and signals for what they are experiencing, after a few clicks it will intuitively become obvious how the navigation bar has been structured.

Rehearsing Reality is available in English and other language translations are being programmed for use in the near future.

When *Rehearsing Reality* is activated either on the website or in DVD version, the active viewer will first encounter a series of other options. The other elements contained within the website version include: a list of credits and acknowledgements, technical information about the computer requirements to be able to access the film and a forum designed to instigate active viewers to enter into discussion on topics related to the film. This feature has been elaborated specifically to add a new layer of debate about the topics debated in the film.

When activating *Rehearsing Reality* either in the website or DVD version, the active viewer will be able to access it in four different ways:

1. Introduction + Act 1 + sequences
2. Introduction + Act 2 + sequences
3. Introduction + Act 1: On this option the active viewer will continue to see interruptions/freeze frames but in order to continue seeing the play the user only needs to click on the right side of the navigation bar. In this case the five seconds repeat mode is not applied.
4. Introduction + Act 2: On this option the active viewer will continue to see interruptions/freeze frames but in order to continue seeing the play the user only

needs to click on the right side of the navigation bar. In this case the five seconds repeat mode is not applied.

As in Forum Theatre, interruptions are also a key feature of *Rehearsing Reality*. By having the main flow of the *docufragmentary* interrupted, active viewers are able to stop, think, reflect and interact with it. The process of interaction reveals new and different channels of information which can be accessed, leading to a process of interpretation which can emerge, allowing an active viewer to enrich their experience and appreciate different perspectives of the work.

Through its use of the Korsakow System, *Rehearsing Reality* is breaking from a traditional, formal order by instituting a certain degree of disorder and introduces the active viewer to a new form of organisation. It is intended that through being more open in its structure than traditional formats it allows the development of new meanings.

Although *Rehearsing Reality* offers a way to understand the nature and the rules of Forum Theatre, it also relies on each person's capacity to comprehend the complex signification imposed by the work upon them. Active viewers are not only introduced to a different theatrical methodology but also to a different cultural reality and to a different way of seeing a documentary.

5.5.2 Conclusion

This chapter offers an accessible overview of the ideas and concepts that have influenced the creation of the interactive *docufragmentary Rehearsing Reality*. It specifically explored the notions of interruption and deconstruction of conventional aesthetics in semiotics and theatre, particularly Forum Theatre. The main aim consists in finding the presentation that would work best in showing the research findings of this thesis while creating a dialogue with the active viewer.

The chapter also reveals not only the practical information relating to the period of post-production of the film but also it exposes the extensive reflexive process behind this last stage of making it.

The Korsakow System has been introduced as a system that allows us to deconstruct the formal narrative of documentaries in order to create a new type of film aesthetic - an aesthetic involving improbability, disorder, ambiguity, disruption and fragmented thoughts, so as to offer the active viewer a range of possible interpretations and suggestions that greatly differ from the kind of meaning presented in conventional linear films. This is the main foundation supporting *Rehearsing Reality*, a *docufragmentary* created without the authoritative voice of the author, but rather as an open experience for the active viewer interpretation.

6. Conclusion: The End Of The Beginning

This thesis began by questioning Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed's relationship with the Landless Movement, particularly in relation to the claim that this methodology provides audience members with the opportunity to interact at a meaningful level through open new channels of dialogue and, further to this, transfer these new experiences into their own lives.

By exposing the interactions and dialogical relationships established in the Forum Theatre this thesis attempts to demonstrate that although reality in general presents itself as fixed and unalterable, this theatrical method can awaken in the spectator the possibility to question social structures of power. Forum Theatre experiences are not only about identifying who is the oppressor or who is the oppressed, as Boal himself points out, "the oppressed and oppressors should not be naively confused with angels and devils. Neither one nor the other exists in a pure state" (Boal 2006: 103). The main experience offers "spect-actors" the chance to reflect on both arguments embedding different visions of the world. As well, the reflexive process provides an unlimited amount of information allowing for knowledge to expand while also provoking associations with experiences lived in the realm outside theatre.

However it is fundamental to stress that the Theatre of the Oppressed itself does not guarantee change. For Boal his theatre acts as a key, but he maintains his views that 'the key does not open the door. It is he or she, who, with the help of the key, opens the door' (Babbage 2006 :33).

The interactive structure of Forum Theatre offers spect-actors the possibility to immerse themselves into a reflective process about their personal and social lives. This experience can lead them to interact with the stage and to continue to reflect about their actions outside the theatre realm. Therefore the experiences that occur in Forum Theatre cannot be considered as ends in themselves; they rather should be considered as new beginnings.

In *Rehearsing Reality*, the landless activist Gladson Farias, compares Forum Theatre experiences to the actions carried out inside the movement. He points out that 'when the

MST place people in situations of conflict, they are the ones to find a response to it. It's not going to be a leader, or an activist, who responds, the community needs to discuss what they'll do". For him, "This is Forum Theatre".⁸⁷

As in Forum Theatre, the MST methodology also offers the landless a chance to reflect about their reality in order to change it. The decision to move to a camp or participate in a land occupation has to come from each individual, and once more, this participation is not the end of a process but rather a beginning of a new stage in their lives.

This comparison between Forum Theatre and the Landless Movement, also points to another pertinent element within this thesis. It not only reveals how Forum Theatre has been applied by the MST peasants, but also it exposes through art, the marginal social reality and the world of exclusion the Brazilian peasant landless are living under and the attempts they are employing to reverse this situation.

In this sense, the thesis also focuses on the social and political role of art and how particular applications of theatre and film can be used to understand and possibly transform points of view and raise consciousness of contemporary world issues.

Art here is perceived not as a tool offering a single or definitive answer to problems faced in life, but rather it is presented as a medium, which opens up new channels of thought, new directions which can instigate one to change the passive status into that of an active participant. Artistic production can only attempt to open up differing directions and points of view. The essential element proposed within this thesis is that the spectator has to be invited to participate, and that the communication can create an impact on that person.

In this sense, as argued in *Rehearsing Reality*⁸⁸ the work of Boal is radical. It is a political theatre that offers spect-actors the chance to become producers and participants of a stimulating theatre which can provoke changes in their lives.

⁸⁷ See *Rehearsing Reality* sequence *Creativity*

⁸⁸ See *Rehearsing Reality* sequence *Aesthetics*

Appendix 1: Glossary

Terms related to the Theatre of the Oppressed

1. Aesthetics of the Education of the Oppressed

This is the latest term created by Boal in 2004. It aims to use word, image, sound and ethics as a way to develop all the aesthetic capabilities of people.

2. Aesthetic space

Boal refers to the stage as an 'aesthetic space', i.e. a site where a series of imaginative experiments can take place. Like a mirror, it allows you to see yourself, recognize who you are and imagine who you could become.

For Boal the aesthetic space combines three properties: plasticity (the quality of imagination and dreaming); telemicroscopy (like a magnifying glass, the stage has the power to allow us to observe things closer) and dichotomy or self-reflexivity (the stage creates a new space and the person who is acting is also the actor performing).

3. Catharsis (in the Theatre of the Oppressed)

This term is connected to the notion of *dynamization* which aims to motivate spectators to actively interfere in actions taking place in the theatre in order to transfer it to real life. Boal's defines his catharsis as 'intervention' rather than 'contemplation', a dramatic action which he affirms takes place in Aristotle's concept of catharsis.

4. Cop in the Head

A term created by Boal to define the internalized oppressions located in our own heads rather than dependant on external circumstances. The Cop in the Head is also part of the Rainbow of Desire, Boal's therapeutic techniques aimed to locate these internal oppressors, that can prevent us from taking action, in order to discover alternative ways to move them away from us.

5. Forum Theatre

In this theatre a group both creates and presents a scene which aims to resolve a collective problem. In this scene, the main protagonist has to fail to accomplish what s/he wants. The audience members can then stop the scene where they want (most often with the help of the joker) and propose a new solution to the problem. The main aim is to activate the audience members to physically replace the main protagonist and to suggest an alternative solution to their problem. In short, spect-actors should rehearse their realities.

6. Image Theatre

Participants are invited in this form of theatre to use their own bodies in order to reveal oppressive experiences, ideas and dreams. Each selected theme will be represented through a 'sculpt' image made out of the participant's body. Subsequently these sculpted images 'gain life' to express critical thinking and action.

7. Invisible Theatre

An enactment of a scene in real time, representing a social problem in an open, public space involving members of the public as participants without their acknowledgement. The main aim of this theatrical practice is to provoke the public to engage in public debate about a specific topic.

8. Joker

The coordinator/facilitator of a Theatre of the Oppressed workshop, rehearsal or performance. In Forum Theatre, the joker central role is to encourage the spectators to actively participate in debates and physically interact with the action taken place on the stage. For Boal, in order to be a good joker it is fundamental to be curious and honest, because only in that way s/he will be able to provoke a good forum. The Joker figure has been adapted from Boal's Joker's System developed during the 1960s.

9. Legislative Theatre

A system developed by Boal at the time he was elected *Vereador* (Member of the Legislative Chamber) in Rio de Janeiro from 1992 to 1996. Legislative Theatre involves all practices of the Theatre of the Oppressed. As Boal writes, it 'brings theatre back into the

centre of political action'. Its main goal is to motivate citizens to participate into the political debate by using theatre (as a means of communication) to discuss the most relevant problems affecting a group or a community.

10. Newspaper Theatre

A technique based in the transformation of daily news items into performance as a way to examine, expose and criticize key factors revealed by the media. Created during the 1960s, Newspaper Theatre aimed at transferring the means of theatre production to the people.

11. Rainbow of Desire

These series of techniques, developed by Boal while he was living on exile in Europe, are designed to search and overcome internalized oppressions of individuals. With the Rainbow of Desire, Boal stated that 'the boundaries between therapy and theatre become blurred'.

12. Spect-actor

This term refers to the spectator who becomes an active participant on a Theatre of the Oppressed performance.

Terms related to Landless Movement

1. Conscientização

This is a central term in Paulo Freire's education methodology. It focuses on the transformation of conscience and praxis as necessary steps for the process of transformation within a specific reality.

2. Liberation Theology

It is a school of Theology within the Roman Catholic Church predominantly practiced in Latin America during the 1960s and 1970s. It was formed by a series of catholic priests engaged in political activism and the fight against oppression and poverty.

3. Mística

It has been performed in the MST since its creation. It follows the theology liberation mass rituals which frequently used to take place in the MST camps and settlements during the 1970s and early 1980s. It is a ritualized form of symbolism involving art and collective memory of the landless in their struggle for land.

4. Road Camp

A temporary accommodation made out of huts covered with black plastic sheeting or palm fronds, most often located near to the land selected to be occupied.

5. Settlement

After the landless officially have won the right to stay in the land, families start the process of building houses and planting crops throughout the settlement.

Appendix 2: Interview Transcripts

1. Augusto Boal – London - March 2004

(NS) The MST is already making people aware of their situation, so what is the role of the TO?

(AB) The TO is a language, so it is important that the people from the MST speak that language. Language is the only way to understand things and maybe the verbal language is used too much and even misused to a point where the necessity of dialogue in the exchange of people is not conveyed anymore. The TO is Theatre, it is of the Oppressed but it is theatre, so it is a static language, and by static it means that we understand the things that we cannot understand just by words.

One day a peasant said that he loved the TO because it helped him to understand everything that he already knew. This is something extremely important. We have to learn the things that we already know. To learn the things that we already know in an aesthetic way gives us the insight of the real nature of the things that we know by talking, we know by observing externally. I think that since they (MST) started using the TO, every time they need more workshops, they need to go deeper, not only to address obvious questions of how to occupy land or how to protect land, but how to convince people that they are right in doing what they are doing. It is not only on those more or less obvious questions but even in the relation to themselves; the relation of gender inside of the MST, the relations between age, the parents and the children, the relations between themselves and culture, the music, what kind of music they would like to play...all those other things that are not exactly related immediately and simply to the possession of the land. So when they do TO what they are already doing is learning what they already know, but knowing in an aesthetic means they go deeper and they became more humanized. I think the TO helps people to humanize themselves and not to be so mechanized, rather than doing things that you are supposed to do, doing them for the reasons that sometimes you don't understand because that's the way it is. So that's why I am happy to work with them, because they are really using the TO, not only in learning just to know, they are learning to become more mature and humanized.

(NS) Is TO challenging the structures of Power inside the MST?

(AB) As I have known the Ligas Camponesas for 40 years, I compare it with the MST, and of course the Ligas Camponesas is a movement that has some similarities with the MST. They were much more centralized, There we could talk about a very solid structure of power, a more centralized structure of power. There was one person, and around that person a few people that strongly directed the Ligas Camponesas. Now, I believe that the fact is that the MST is not so strongly centralized, sometimes it happens that one MST group does something that reflects on the rest of the MST because the media portray it as an 'MST action' In reality however, it is not the MST movement that did it, it is sometimes just one small group, 100 or 200 or 300 people that were involved in the action, and the other ones that do not approve necessarily. But of course the TO questions any kind of power structure because it is democratic, because in the Forum theatre or in any other form of the TO it is not important to know one opinion or what is right or what is wrong, the importance is the multiple mirror of the regard of the others. So when you show some problems you have to see a multiple mirror, a multiple mirror means that many people say sometimes contradictory things. Of course if you are going to take an action tomorrow, you have to form a decision of what are you going to do, but that's democracy.

First there is a moment that you expose your ideas freely but then you have to say what I am going to do? And then whatever the decision is, that is the decision that has to be accepted by all of the people concerned.

For instance if you say, in the army you have the soldier, the soldier has to wake up 5 o'clock in the morning, that they have to eat, take a shower, this and that...and they cannot question anything ever because there is the chief, the general, the general commands the major, the major commands the captain...then that's a structure of power. But, suppose a university, you have the teachers, the teachers have to come at the established hour to the classes, the students must be there, then they have some matters that they have to study during the year, and they have to read some books to produce a film for instance as a result of the studies. So you also have rules in the university, but you cannot say that the university is militarised because it has rules. What we have to discuss is the nature of those rules. Rules have to exist, what I always say is that within rules there must be freedom.

(NS) What are the functions of the games?

(AB) I like games in the TO, and the games in the TO are not something to warm up to. The game is already the TO because it contains the two extreme elements, one side discipline the other side liberty, and discipline has to have rules. If you are going to play soccer you know that you have to use your feet because you cannot use your hands. That's a rule, you cannot say that's a lack of liberty. It's not a lack of liberty, that's part of the game. The goalkeeper can use his hands, and even so he cannot use them for a long time, he has a few seconds to get rid of the ball. So there are rules, but inside the rules you have total liberty.

We have to have discipline and we have to have freedom. If you have freedom without discipline that leads nowhere and if you have discipline without freedom that it is a mechanized human being and that is what the TO is totally against.

(NS) How do you evaluate the TO experiences?

(AB) We don't care about the criteria in the sense of evaluation. We don't want to evaluate in the sense of giving a note. We know it has been good for people and we know that they want more and that is our evaluation, that it's been good for them, so that's important, let's do it.

(NS) Why does the joker need to have charisma?

(AB) I feel to be charismatic is not necessary only for the joker, it is for everyone in life, you have to have some sort of charisma, but what is charisma? It is personality, You have to have your own personality and not to imitate other people. The people who have no charisma are those people who you try to understand their qualities. If they don't have charisma, and suddenly you find that they don't have much more to offer. Charisma is personality; if you have personality you have charisma. I know many people who have strong personalities, and they are wonderful jokers all over the world. I know wonderful jokers. But I think charisma is necessary for every citizen. You have to have charisma, you have to have projects, passion...you have to be passionate, it is fundamental... then you have charisma.

But is not enough to have charisma, what you have to have is a tremendous curiosity. a tremendous honesty, you have to be extremely honest when you are a joker, not to deceive anybody, you have to be clear about what you are doing and to be curious; because you have to learn from people, and if you really want to learn what they think, if you have this curiosity and this amazement, this capacity of being amazed at how they think, how they got to that conclusion, then you can become a good joker. If you are not curious to know what they think you go there only to make a trick of the Forum, that is not a Forum – the Forum is real research to try to see really what those people have to say, and they always have more to say than you are expecting. So curiosity is fundamental and honesty is fundamental too, you cannot pretend to be democratic. You have to be democratic, you have to allow people to talk, you have to confront opinions which are different, you have to go deeper...

Of course you have to control, that is your function there to, but not in the way the police control a demonstration, but in the sense of coordination and that is not control. Once I was in a school here in the UK and I was doing a demonstration and someone said you go there....and I said no you don't do that, if the person has an idea the person should go there, but you don't pressure a person to go on stage and you cannot forbid a person from going on stage. In both areas people have to be free to do what they want to do or not to do something they're not comfortable with.

(NS) Can a spect-actor replace a joker?

(AB) If the person is not coordinating well you can coordinate the joker.

I have also been replaced once, by a group of a women, because they said that I didn't understand what they talked about, that I was misinterpreting what they were saying and so I said OK, please take my place. You can replace me, it's not normal, but you can do it.

(NS) Can a spect-actor replace an antagonist?

(AB) You cannot replace the antagonist in the sense that if you have a protagonist fighting against the antagonist and then you replace the antagonist with someone who is nice, you are not going to effectively rehearse for the future reality.

There are peasants all over West Bengal – and Sanjoy mentioned that he had committed a heresy within the TO – I usually allow the audience to replace the antagonist – but Julian said why? And he said, because in many villages the main oppressor is the father of the father – husband and wife, the father of the father has the power of the family. And many times they appear as the oppressor and then he said – many times I allow the real grandfather to replace the oppressor because I have noticed that when they do that in front of the whole village, from that point on it will be almost impossible to go back and react in the same way. So by experiencing being nicer in the scene they became nice...so this is just one case.

Another case is when the actor who is playing the oppressor does not really understand what being an oppressor means and then someone in the audience can point out that they are not really an oppressor. Then they can say: I am going to show you that the situation is much worse than you think. So we have done replacements in that case, when the actor who is playing the oppressor does not know how to oppress in an accurate way.

(NS) Can you explain the TO catharsis?

(AB) The word catharsis, people use it to say you are emptying yourself of something – that is the way originally used by Aristotle. He said that if you have taken a poison, you have to drink something to expel the poison; that is a catharsis to send the poison away. Of course everyone is in favour of that catharsis; no one wants to stay with poison inside their body. But then he used the word catharsis also to describe the experience that the spectator has when they see the tragic hero doing something which is against the law, against the Gods, against the established ethos of the society, and the protagonist suffers a catastrophe. The protagonist is killed or commits suicide...this is a catastrophe – and for the spectator who has done vicariously the same crime or the same transgression, instead of catastrophe there is the catharsis – if he wants to defy God he did it during the play through the

protagonist, but now he is no longer willing to do the same because he is afraid of the catastrophe. I am against that type of catharsis because I believe that what Theatre should do is to dynamise the spectators and not to take from them the desire to change society. Society is not perfect, if it were perfect I would be Aristotelic, but society is not perfect so we have to change society, and it is not by doing catharsis that we are going to change society, it is by dynamising ourselves. The only catharsis I would accept is the catharsis of fear. If you are afraid, go to the FT and get your courage back and eliminate your fear - you are then going to be ready to fight.

(NS) How do you feel when people use TO techniques differently?

(AB) There are many people doing TO without knowing that they are doing TO, but this is OK, if it works nice, but I feel bad when people are doing the opposite of what they should be doing in TO.

I know that some people here in Europe sometimes use one exercise, one game or even they deform the technique with different purposes to the TO aimed at fighting oppression and freeing people. And sometimes they try to use those techniques to accommodate people to make people work more. But I also know that in Japan sometimes they use Mozart to make people work better, depend on other factors they may use Wagner – they use it to stimulate workers, sometimes they use Debussy... They use the music for different purposes.

Happily the TO is so powerful in its democratic essence, it sometimes gets out of control. Sometimes they try to use it for the wrong reasons, but the phenomenon of the TO and the FT is that it is democratic.

(NS) How do you define theatre?

(AB) Theatre involves everything...when they say what you do is politics I say Coriolanus by Shakespeare is politics as well or is it theatre? And they say it is psychological, and I say “to be or not to be” is what? Is it metaphysics or is it theatre?. Theatre is a language, so it has to speak about all human concerns. When you speak in English you don't speak only about politics, or only about psychology, politics, etc... we speak about our concerns, a

language is meant to put people in touch with one another and people exchange views on politics, psychology, about metaphysics, about love, about emotions.

The TO is theatre and theatre is poetry when you use words, I believe that you maximise this when you are capable of exploring most meanings with the minimum amount of signifiers. When you do music you organize the sound in time, when you do a painting or a sculpture you organize lines, volumes and colours.

So music organizes sounds in time, in plastic arts you organize colours and lines in space, in theatre you organize human actions in time and space. That is all theatre is. I am here, people are there and then there is the organization of those human actions in space and time.

The TO is the possibility to go a bit beyond the definition of Shakespeare when he said in Hamlet that Theatre is a mirror of society. It's a mirror that shows our reflections. And we try to go beyond that definition – yes it is a mirror but it's a magic mirror that we can penetrate, and by penetrating it you can transform the image that is there if you don't like it. So it is about penetrating that mirror and transforming its image, because we know that the act of transforming transforms he who acts.

If I take the clay with my hands and make a statue, I transform the clay, but the act of transforming the clay transformed me and now I am a sculpture. If I do the same with words and if I change the words I modify the words, and I put the words in the way I want. I transform the words, and the act of transforming the words transforms me into a poet.

In the TO it is the same. If you go to the stage, you intervene in the stage and you modify the human action that is there and you create new human actions and human relations – the act of transforming those relations transforms you into a citizen. And I believe that to fully be a citizen you have to practise TO.]

2. Augusto Boal - Rio de Janeiro - October 2002

(NS) You returned from your exile in 1986, why did you start to work with the MST only in 2001?

(AB) In the last few years the MST struggle became much more visible. Before this period it was difficult because they did not know what was the purpose of the Theatre of the Oppressed (TO). In the first meeting I remember there was an certain distrust because the theatre in general was perceived by the people as a luxury product, as a thing that is not important that it is only for people to have fun. Then suddenly, the people perceived that the theatre is a form of knowledge where they learned that they only make theatre because they are humans, and all humans are theatre. They had perceived that this is an extraordinary communication weapon. An instrument of communication; an instrument properly comprehending your reality to better understand the reality that they live. When they understood that through the theatre it is possible to analyse the past in order for the present to invent the future, they adhered totally to the TO. They have appropriated the techniques and are practicing the TO throughout Brazil.

(NS) Can you point the main difference between Theatre of the Oppressed and the sort of theatre you used to do during the 60's?

(AB) During that time, the political theatre we produced, used to take messages to the people, and on these messages we used to tell them exactly what they should do as if they did not have any ideas, desires or knowledge. The message was intransitive, we never asked the peasants what were their thoughts, what were their needs, we only used to say what they should do as if they were all the same as if there were not individualities.

(NS) How do you define the oppressed?

(AB) The oppressed in our language are those that have lost the right to dialogue and are compelled to listen to a monologue, a coercive monologue. What we want is to re-establish dialogue, because only dialogue humanizes, only dialogue creates identity. I love to say that the identity of a person is made by what a person is and also what they do for others. I have the identity of a father; I am a father, because I have two children, if I had no children I would not be a father. I am a man because women exist; white, because my skin has not been touched by excessive sun. Through others I make the references to myself. So, my

identity is that which I am, yes it is clear but there are others to whom I become related. and in this dialogue this completeness is reached.

(NS) What exactly the Theatre of the Oppressed offers to people?

(AB) When `a peasant rural worker, a worker, an Indian, or a woman practices the TO techniques, they become more than they were before, because the theatre really opens perspectives and frees the people so that they feel that they are always more than they think they are, we are all more than we think we are, I am more than I think I am, I am more than I have been, I can be much more than what I am now...

The theatre is art and the art is not a reproduction of the real it is a representation of the real. So when a group of landless presents a scene, they are not only reproducing a scene that happens in real life, they are producing a representation of reality. There is a significant difference between reproduction and representation. A reproduction would be to make an exact equal scene, to make it in the same way as reality. Representation includes a point of view so that when reality is represented, it is itself involved in this representation.

When a MST member who already knows everything about his life, wants to make an aesthetic representation of his life, he is going to have an aesthetic distance and represent his life, and not only reproduce it. He is going to be transformed into an artist and be able to see all the things with a certain perspective and that allows comprehension. When we are deeply involved in activities that we participate in we can have a general picture of it but we cannot see ourselves in the situation. And there is a huge difference when I see this situation and try to resolve it. When I see myself in a specific situation, I analyse 'myself and the situation' therefore I see possibilities of action that I would not have seen if I was only seeing myself inside of the situation. Seeing the other and myself, I can see where I am, then I discover where I came from and can invent where I am going, this is what happens to a peasant or in any other person.

Everyone is able to perceive things and not only to register information, like your camera is registering an image. This camera is being objective but not you, you are choosing an

angle you are being subjective. The camera is inside a situation and you are also looking at the situation. When we say that a film is good or not it is because the camera is good, it is because the filmmaker has chosen an angle, has zoomed in or out, the filmmaker has done all the work. The camera does anything, but it does not know what it is doing and sometimes we are the same. There are moments when we do things that can hurt us. And why we decide not to practice positive acts that could liberate us from oppression? If each one of us could see ourselves in a similar situation all of us could think about ways to transform our existence, our life, into what it could become.

The MST is already in a very intense phase of development and organization. So they can receive the method of the Theatre of the Oppressed in a much faster way than they would receive it if they were in an organizational phase.

The Theatre of the Oppressed methods should be used by a person or a group capable of teaching them to others. I am absolutely convinced that no one teaches anything, if he doesn't learn and doesn't learn if he doesn't teach.

Every time we give workshops we say: please learn this well because you will have to multiply and teach it to others. I am absolutely convinced that no one teaches anything. When people learn that the TO it is not for individual use the perception of learning is much bigger. And for all of us who teach we learn at least, to see how each person learns in a different way. That's already a lesson to learn because each one is a human being with their own sensibility. And for all of us who teach, it's a way for us to learn about what is a human being.

(NS) How important is the multiplication effect of the Theatre of the Oppressed?

(AB) The multiplication is an essential element of TO. The TO is not to be consumed by a person or group, a person or group who really take advantage of all of this, is that person or that group that is capable of teaching. I am absolutely convinced that nobody truly teaches if you do not learn; and if you do not learn, you don't teach.

When people form groups I say, look, you are learning these theatrical methods here, but you will have to learn well because you are going to have to multiply and to teach it. When they know that it is not for individual consumption, the understanding of teaching is much greater, and in this we teach that to learn is at the very least to see how each person learns different forms. This already is a process of learning, because each one is a human being, each one has sensitivities, and so to see a person learn a process that we are teaching them, is a form of learning too, it is to be a human being.

(NS) What are the Theatre of the Oppressed methods applied by the MST?

(AB) The TO is immense, but you do not have to learn it in its entirety to practice it; you learn small portions, because this is already making part of the whole. The main techniques developed in our workshops though the exercises are games, the techniques of the Theatre forum. But the techniques of the Rainbow of Desire are also being exercised. In addition we have practiced analysing images, screen images, the circuit of images, and techniques for introspection, that I know helps them to resolve problems that are not material, that are not objective.

3. Gladson Stélio Brito Pereira (MST Local Leadership) - Sergipe State - April, 2003
(NS) What are the MST main objectives?

(GP) To conquer the land; but to conquer land also involves fighting for infrastructure, so we also fight to obtain financial support from the government in order to develop infrastructure amongst our settlements. There are also problems between men and women within the camps and settlements, so we need to encourage them to debate these gender questions in order to create solidarity and a fraternal settlement.

To understand how this happens you have to understand the logic of the MST, and to understand that, this construction is a historical process that has no end.

What we try to create in the MST are conditions for the people to understand what is the meaning of a landless person. The MST promotes 'formation' courses in order for people to learn some theoretical elements about the history of the MST, of Brazil, of class fight, and discuss questions of gender, health, and also of ethical values. We teach all these elements and also the experiences of life. For us, to participate in one land occupation is part of it; to pass one week in a camp or settlement and to see up close the difficulties that the people are going through. This is what the school of the MST must do.

(NS) Can you describe the methodology behind the MST?

(GP) In the MST we do not have a defined doctrine, or one closed method, we have already experimented with many methods of the past and present in order to try to provoke a personal transformation. There is not one existing ideal form: Marx, Che Guevara, Pablo Freire are applied into our reality but we allow the practice to decide if a method is positive for us or not. We have basic principles and strategic objectives. The fight for the transformation of society, the fight for agrarian reform and land; in order to achieve these objectives we utilize various references. It is not the MST coordinators the ones to decide which one is the right method; actually, it is the practice which defines it. The MST understands that human beings are very complex therefore, we have to be open to all its dimensions.

(NS) What is the importance of the Theatre of the Oppressed for the MST?

(GP) If we offer opportunities for the people they can grow and develop. But around here, people never have opportunities. The problem is that people from this region never had opportunities to explore their potential.

So we in the MST are creating these opportunities for the people. Lots of people want to change our people's lives for the better, just that sometimes they don't have any techniques that enables them to work with people easily and clearly. The Theatre of the Oppressed gave that to us. It's better than having a meeting or a course of three days or a week. That puts a lots of information in people's heads. They'll pick up on some things but then forget them later. And then the opportunity has been missed. Theatre's not the same. Theatre grabs people emotionally and touches the heart. Theatre says, take your heart and put it right into the scene and use your head to defend it. That's it. When there's a problem that people feel strongly about use your head to solve your heart's problem.

The other interesting aspect of the TO is that it opens opportunities through open discussions and enables people to put forward their opinions and more than this, it creates a space where they can transform themselves into artists, feeling that their opinions and participation are valuable.

We present the technique but obviously the results that are to be reached depend on each person. Therefore it is important that Boal's methods can get into the camps and settlements so people can experiment and experience with his methodology. If the methodology does not reach the people, it is not good for us.

(NS) So far, what has been the main contribution of the Theatre Forum (FT) for the MST?

(GP) Forum Theatre creates a situation in which reality can be anticipated, for example, in the possibility of an eviction, what are the people going to do? They are going to reach a conclusion; the people will have discussed and participated on this subject stimulated by the theatre.

The piece of theatre finishes but the discussions continues. And when people are confronted with a problem, they will have accumulated a series of opinions and suggestions to put them into practice. So what does the MST do? The MST is a kind of massive Forum Theatre when it invites people to occupy land 'Come on, let's occupy land,' it says and has the first meetings, and occupies the land, and forms groups. Each group has its role. The food group, the security team, they each have their 'actors'. We are a great big Forum Theatre We place people into these situations of conflict and they have to find a response. It's not going to be a leader, or an activist, who responds, the community needs to discuss what they'll do. This is Forum Theatre!

Through debate the Forum Theatre is raising consciousness. People are allowed to bring up their opinions and who can understand about our fight for the land more than the people? As the media does not offer us the chance to show what we are doing in the rural areas, FT can be considered an alternative form of communication between us and society.

(NS) Can you describe the TO experiences amongst the MST?

(GP) So what does the MST do? The MST is a kind of massive Forum Theatre when it invites people to occupy land 'Come on, let's occupy land,' it says and has the first meetings, and occupies the land, and forms groups. Each group has its role. The food group, the security team, they each have their 'actors'. We are a great big Forum Theatre We place people into these situations of conflict and they have to find a response. It's not going to be a leader, or an activist, who responds, the community needs to discuss what they'll do. This is Forum Theatre!

I am convinced that we will still see many TO activities amongst the MST but also we have to be aware that this work can lose direction and, if it loses direction it also loses the

meaning. To avoid that, the coordinators of these theatre practices have a duty to understand the importance of this work amongst our communities.

Here in the internal spaces of the MST we are working with the TF and some of the schools, camps, and settlements. The techniques of the TF are being used as a political instrument in the formation of our people. That is, inside of our courses for political formation we are also incorporating the theatre workshops. It is important to remember that our people have a low self-esteem as they are always used to be treated like 'leftovers', always waiting for orders.

People are not used to expose themselves and to speak out. They have the desire to do it but have not practiced it. So the TF allows people to rehearse this reality. The TF practices provoke the person to speak, and when they return from the workshop they return a little uninhibited, a little more talkative, a little more courageous to expose themselves, and so this is already one significant contribution. It is from this new behaviour that new leaders within the movement are born. Why? Because we do not have leaders that are timid and shy. And so, the people have to embolden our people, we have to make our people to defy these social roles and reveal a state of courage and tranquillity. Another question is related to the collective work –the FT practice shows the strength of people working together, and this creates a 'collective spirit' amongst people.

(NS) How are the people throughout the camps and settlements receiving this technique?

(GP) The fact that people are multiplying the techniques is already a positive signal. Because if people were not multiplying it would mean that the practice would not be useful for the people. Up until 2001 we had not heard of the TO. The experiences we are seeing now are an extraordinary move forth, taking into consideration that only two years before the people did not have a relationship with the theatre.

(NS) Which element of the TF is contributing the most to the MST?

(GP) It is difficult to answer because the TF has various potentials. And the MST has various necessities. I see that the FT can facilitate our work in many areas. As much in our

relationship with society, as much as in the process of forming our militants, the process of formation amongst our people in the camps and settlements, in the dynamic process of self-knowledge and the knowledge of others - it is a very rich thing. We have an infinite number of problems which we see as challenges to be surpassed and FT can be an auxiliary instrument in overcoming these challenges.

(NS) What is the actual situation of the Quixabeira camp?

(GP) It has a total of 350 families that have lived almost 3 years in this camp. The current situation of the camp is difficult with a possible eviction and we are all in a state of alert. There is a real possibility that an eviction may occur and if it does we all want to be ready to negotiate with the police. We certainly will not give up the fight for land. We are practicing Forum Theatre to rehearse our reality, so that when it happens we are more prepared for it.

4. Lupercio Damaceno (MST Cultural Activist) - Sergipe State - May 2003

(NS) Can you describe the role of your work as a MST cultural activist?

(LD) I returned from Rio with all I'd learnt about the Theatre of the Oppressed, but I wasn't going to keep it to myself, I was going to share it with the people in the MST settlements and road camps, mainly here in the outback.

I was setting up groups and giving workshops, organizing meetings around here in the outback. People are receiving the ideas really well. Here in the outback there are about 6,000 families in MST road camps and settlements.

(NS) What is your vision of the Theatre of the Oppressed?

(LP) It is a dangerous weapon. I think that people only begin to understand things when they begin to question them. The great contribution of the Theatre of the Oppressed is the fact that it provokes a debate encapsulating the questioning and opinions of various people. I find that the movement, in accepting the methodology of the TO is accepting a challenge. The TO can contribute a lot into our fight, because it motivates the people to participate.

The youth does not have much patience to sit around in a chair attending a drawn out speech. The TO involves them to participate through a more dynamic and poetic language and this format offers a more interesting way to do politics.

(NS) What are the main difficulties in working with the Theatre of the Oppressed here in the region of Sergipe?

(LD) At the beginning it was very difficult for cultural activists like myself not to have financial support to travel around camps and settlements. Many times this situation made it impractical to carry out the theatre workshops because the distances between settlements are enormous. But recently, this circumstance has been modified and today at a national level, the MST Cultural Activists are receiving a small allowance for expenses so they can develop their work.

Obviously this has not transformed the situation of the people who want to participate in the workshops but do not have conditions to travel to the locations where they are taking place. Here, in the case of the 'Sertão' is a specific case where we have to concentrate the

theatre workshops in two settlements that are surrounded by others because of the distances between them. In the movement today, we understand that the hunger of the people is not only for food but for culture as well. The people want to participate and most frequently the desire to participate exceeds their difficult financial circumstance.

(NS) Which are the main subjects being debated in the theatre?

(LD) The subjects are chosen by the groups participating in the TO workshops. It normally involves questions related to gender, the fight for land, machismo, drugs, and the various other political questions defended by the MST itself.

(NS) How many people have already participated in the Theatre of the Oppressed workshops here in Sertão region?

(LD) It is difficult to quantify it, but up until this moment (April 2003) 70 people have had the chance to participate in my workshops. Of these 70 people, 8 continue developing the work in the settlement areas, in regional schools and camps and meetings. From the moment people begin to have more consciousness about this type of theatre they begin to participate more frequently in its works.

(NS) How do you resume these theatrical experiences?

(LD) Recently, at the play entitled *The Eviction* presented in the Quixabeira camp, the people involved themselves so much in the play that during the scene of the eviction even the children started to cry.

What I have observed really confirms Boal's ideas that everyone is an actor or actress, and that we are all able to free our artistic expression. Throughout the TO workshops, I have discovered poets, musicians, and singers, but most importantly, the fact that the local culture has been made transparent through the theatre. The theatrical representations are true and reflect the difficult reality of the people of this region.

The MST is aware that we are not going to construct a paradise isolated from what is happening in the rest of the world therefore this theatre experiences are quite important to us.

5. Felinto Procópio dos Santos “Mineirinho” (MST Culture) - Sergipe State - April 2003

(NS) The MST took nearly 16 years to debate subjects as culture and the art, why did this take so long?

(M) The MST understands the importance of culture and the art, but during these past 20 years, our focus was to try to shape the political landscape and fight for the land. Culture and art were never a problem for the MST, but to capacitate people does not happen overnight.

It is very difficult to work with culture in social movements, and the MST is no different. This is because the logical and the natural order of the things is to leave the people to feed off the culture and products of industrial garbage, so this creates the platform for people to sing, to make theatre; this is the order of the things. But members of the movement want to invert the same order.

During the last 20 years of MST, in our settlements, the young and the women did not have any space. A school is a type of closed prison; the young do study. Education finishes at the degree level, always in a hurry, and consequently, can provide an excuse to leave the settlement and move to the city.

In the last three years (2001 to 2003) people have at last begun to debate the subject of culture in the various states where the movement is organized. Historically all ‘leftist’ movements including the MST understood culture as entertainment. When we have needed to organize a cultural event we invited artists to create the entertainment. We experienced a great leap forward in quality when Sebastião Salgado came and decided to photograph the MST. As well, from the moment when we arranged his exhibition called *Land* we understood that culture is not only music and poetry as we had been used to practicing culture before.

We had amongst our members groups of musicians and poets and this made us think about exploring other artistic expressions.

We understand that we have to train new members to also be sensitive to art. They have to understand art's role and popular culture. The class struggle needs to be present in politics, the economy and in culture. If a leader only understands politics and economics and doesn't understand the function of art he only has half of the picture.

(NS) How is art contributing to the MST social struggle?

(M) Many MST members still have difficulty with reading and understanding written texts. Therefore, the arts must become a pedagogical resource for our people. Today, the music, theatre, poetry, and painting develop a tapestry through which the people can understand the importance of land reform, the fight for the land and the historical process of the formation of the Brazilian people.

In fact, our encampments exist within a difficulty of working with culture and art. Why? Because there is a preoccupation of both the left and the social movement always to invite and present artists, but not involve them in the possibility of forming and realizing the potential of the artists within the movement. With the MST, our preoccupation is our collective culture, where the artists who already exist help to form the potential of artists within the movement, because we are all artists.

Today we realized that our art projects are different in form because we do not want to adopt the same practices of the past 60s. In addition, we cannot repeat the errors of the past 80 years, where we have found that the artist's role gave part of the art itself to the process. Within the movement we are taking great care so that the art does not take on a utilitarian form.

When people begin to coexist with artists, people perceive that beyond them there are public exhibitions created by people that have fantastic ideas in the direction of helping to construct a proposal free in the art field. We are making this extraordinary form with Augusto Boal through his Theatre of the Oppressed (TO).

Instead of Boal bringing a theatre group, one of the many groups that has worked with people, he is teaching our group to work with his ideas, with what he conceives as art

starting from the theatre. The MST has managed to absorb this methodology. We are understanding the theatre as a pedagogical resource, a pedagogical instrument for the construction of knowledge, for political formation. Not as entertainment or amusement.

(NS) How was Boal's arrival in the MST?

(M) When Boal arrived, he came to spread the TO within the MST. Boal never talked about this, but I imagine that the vision was wise in the sense that it was a partnership that would grow and lead to the multiplying proposal. The project of the TO with the MST fulfilled an important role in bringing the theatre into the movement, and now arriving at the important moment and great jump for people taking the lead in the education sectors. Then, the theatre of the oppressed leaves the cultural sector, like the *Patativa do Assaré* brigade (a popular Brazilian poet, composer, singer and guitar player), and passes to the education sector with a proposal to work in the schools.

At the beginning, we were only a group working with the techniques of the TO, but today this work of the TO starts to become a pedagogical instrument, a resource and instrument to be employed within schools. And what are we going to call the aesthetic education of the oppressed? Clearly this is still in its early stages, but this has already been worked on with a collective culture and is being constructed and formed with the education sector.

(NS) How do you see the Theatre of the Oppressed experiences with the MST?

(M) I think theatre is one of the most genuine tools to humanize people, Theatre plays with our lives, exposing who we are and how we act. In the Theatre of the Oppressed everyone becomes an actor, so classic theatre becomes demystified. Theatre is where we live; it is my reality, my history. When we used this demystification and dealt with roles amongst oppressor and oppressed, we saw it fitted like a glove.

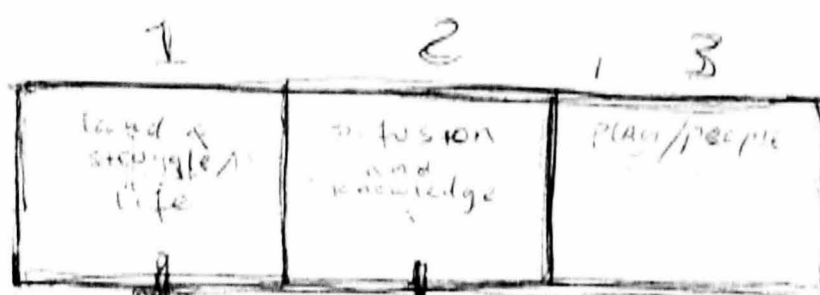
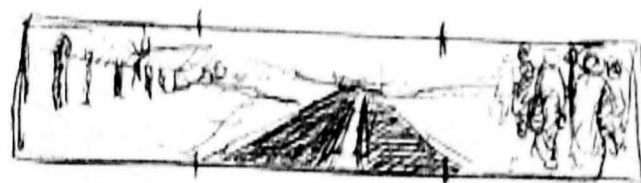
Instead of Boal bringing a theatre group to perform he decided to teach his ideas and his understanding of art on the process of MST's political formation. Boal is a master who has much to offer, and we of the MST still have much to drink of this source. For me specifically, the Theatre of the Oppressed has helped me to find myself as a person.

For me the theatre is a pedagogical instrument, and when I say that it is a pedagogical instrument, it is because it is transforming the construction consciousness.

The TO is a challenge; it makes you display the fact that my idea has to be shown and interpreted, and this is transforming. The TO is a technique and an instrument of reflection to enable the reading of our reality.

Appendix 3: Samples of Rehearsing Reality Scratch Book

open Air Theatre Navigation Book



~~Art~~
 MST info.
 employment
 Vietnam
 vol
 culture
SYMBOLS
 creativity

Aesthetics
 music's
 education
~~Art & culture~~
~~Art & culture~~
 catholics
 jokes
 multiplication
 education
 game

→	history	Acupunct
→	education	Ac1
→	approach	Ac2
→	multiplication	Ac3
→	therapy	Ac4
→	aesthetics	Ac5
→	Art	Ac6
→	mineral	Ac7
→	multiplication	Ac8
→	therapy	Ac9

Collage Navigationbar



theatre
play

Quixa B.
Reimada G.

Joker
Iuperio
Spectator
opression

MST
life

poverty
Utopia
Occupation
Empowerment
opression
Gladson
Val
Vero
Leti

theory
analists

technics & Multiplication

Boal + TO

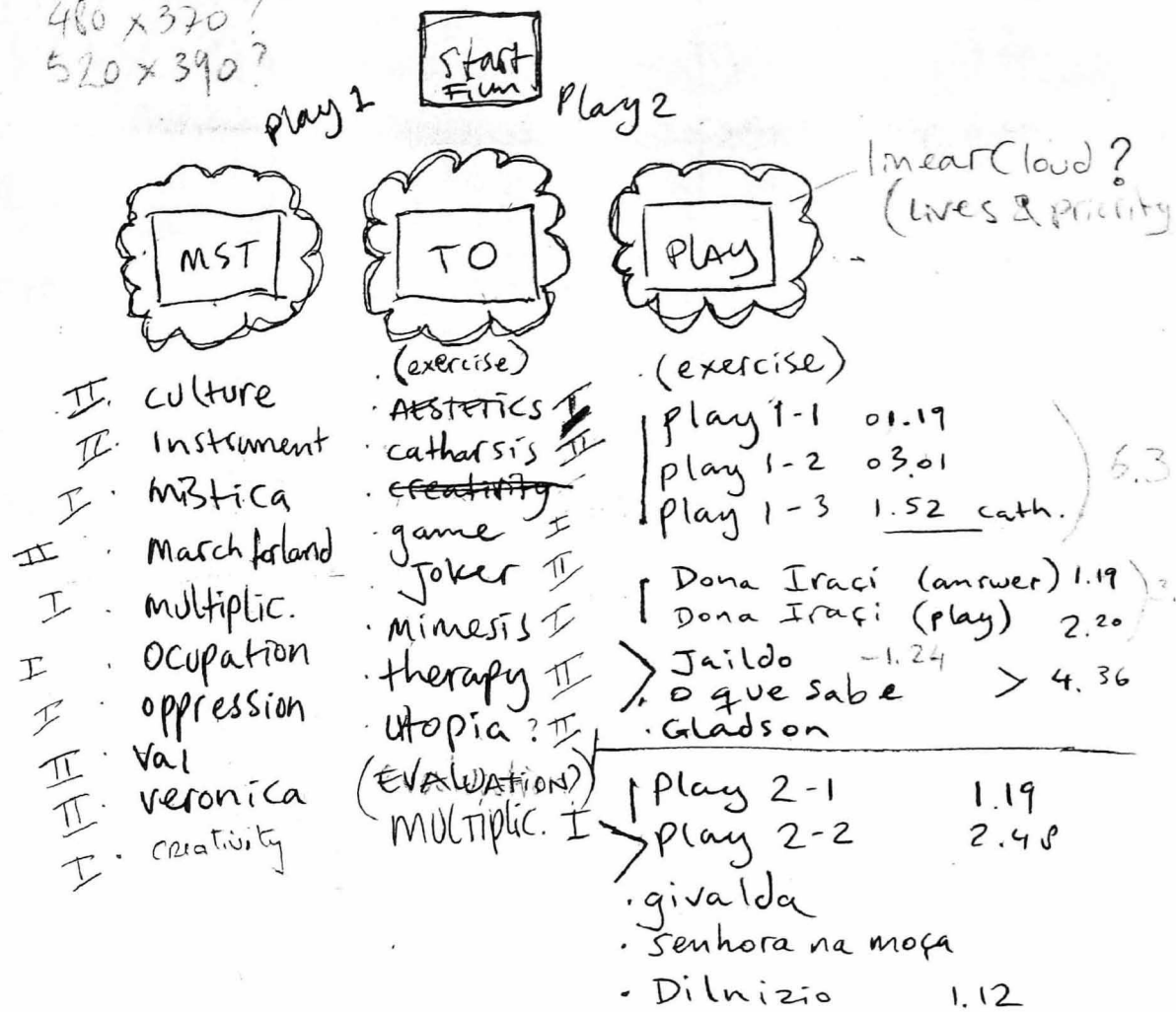
Chomsky

Jane

Adrian

Leti

480 x 320?
520 x 390?



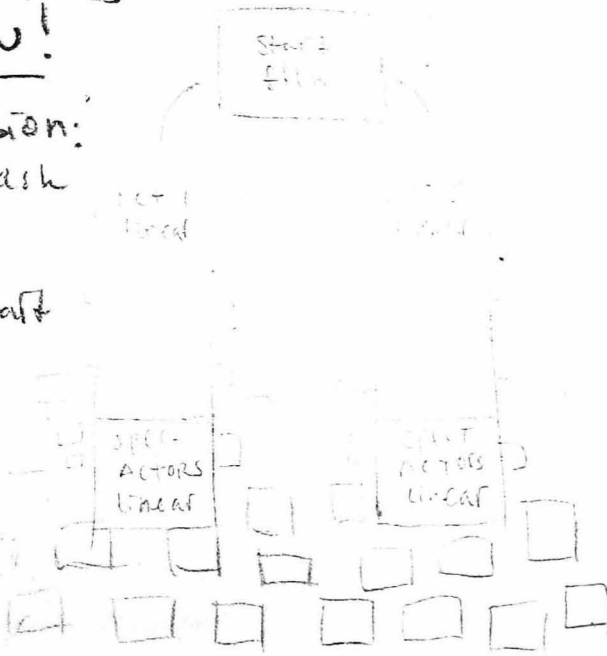
New features Korsakow!

for web version:
web engine ask
to start from
the last film
seen or to start
all over.

Startscreen
can be movie.

Sub-5.txt

clear links?

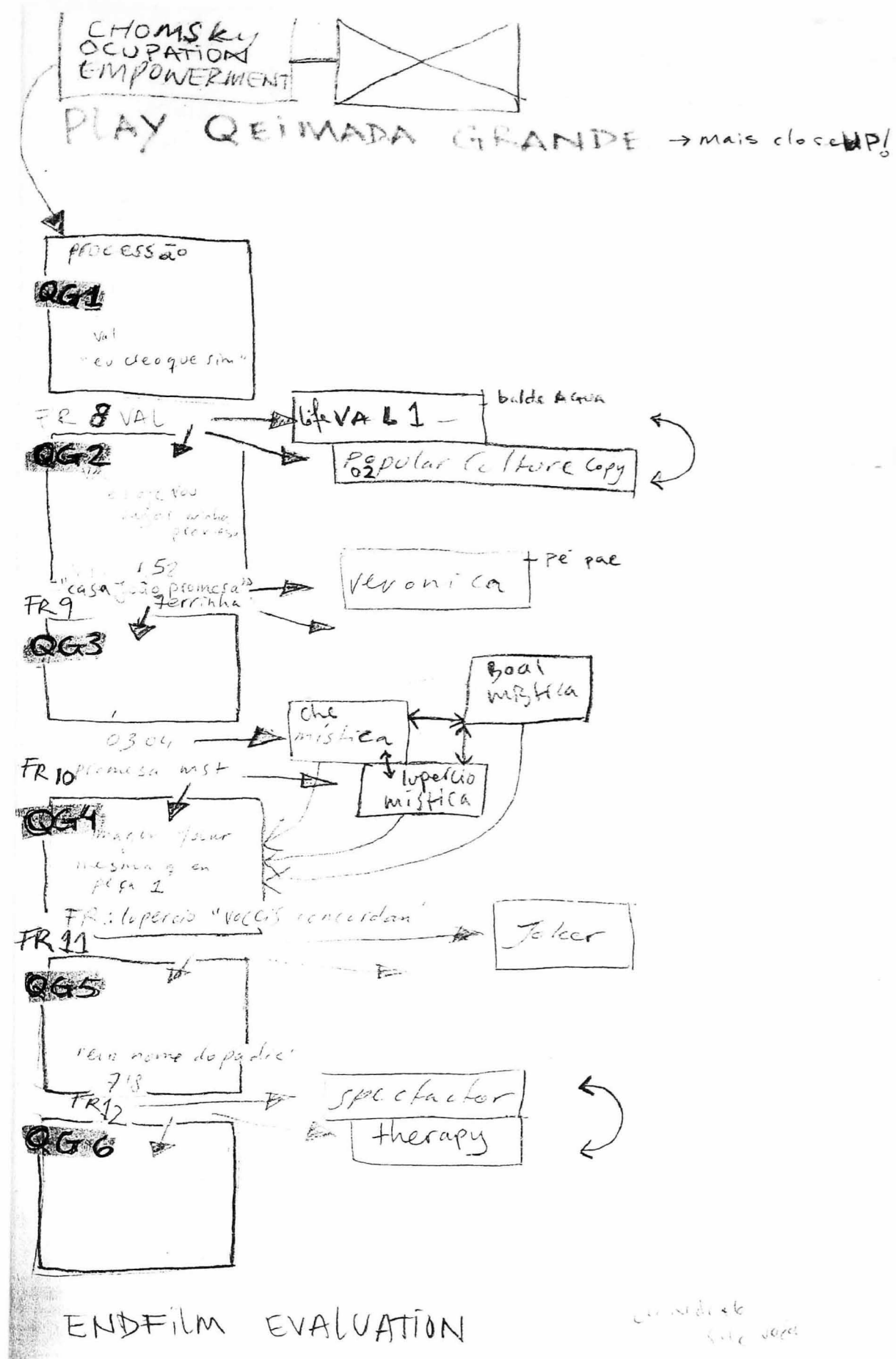


time relevance?

Random link
participation.

RLnk = 1 (on)
RLnk = 0 (off)

→ jump to ...
keycode to



$P1A+Px$ ↓ original priority 1-5	$P1B+Px$ ↑ copy priority 6-10	$P1A-Px$ ↓ copy - 5 priority 1-5	$P1B-Px$ ↑ copy - 5 priority 6-10
$P1A <$ $P1A+Px <$ $P1B -$ $P2B -$ <u>$PA+X <$</u>	$P1B <$ $P1B+Px <$ $P1A -$ $P2A -$ <u>$PB+X <$</u>	$P1A <$ $P1A-Px <$ $P1B -$ $P2B -$ <u>$PA-X <$</u>	$P1B <$ $P1B-Px <$ $P1A -$ $P2A -$ <u>$PB-X <$</u>
$P2A+Px$ ↓ original priority 6-10	$P2B+Px$ ↑ copy priority 1-5	$P2A-Px$ ↓ copy - 5 priority 6-10	$P2B-Px$ ↑ copy - 5 priority 1-5
$P2A <$ $P2A+Px <$ $P2B -$ $P1B -$ <u>$PA+X <$</u>	$P2B <$ $P2B+Px <$ $P1A -$ $P2A -$ <u>$PB+X <$</u>	$P2A <$ $P2A-Px <$ $P1B -$ $P2B -$ <u>$PA-X <$</u>	$P2B <$ $P2B-Px <$ $P1A -$ $P2A -$ <u>$PB-X <$</u>

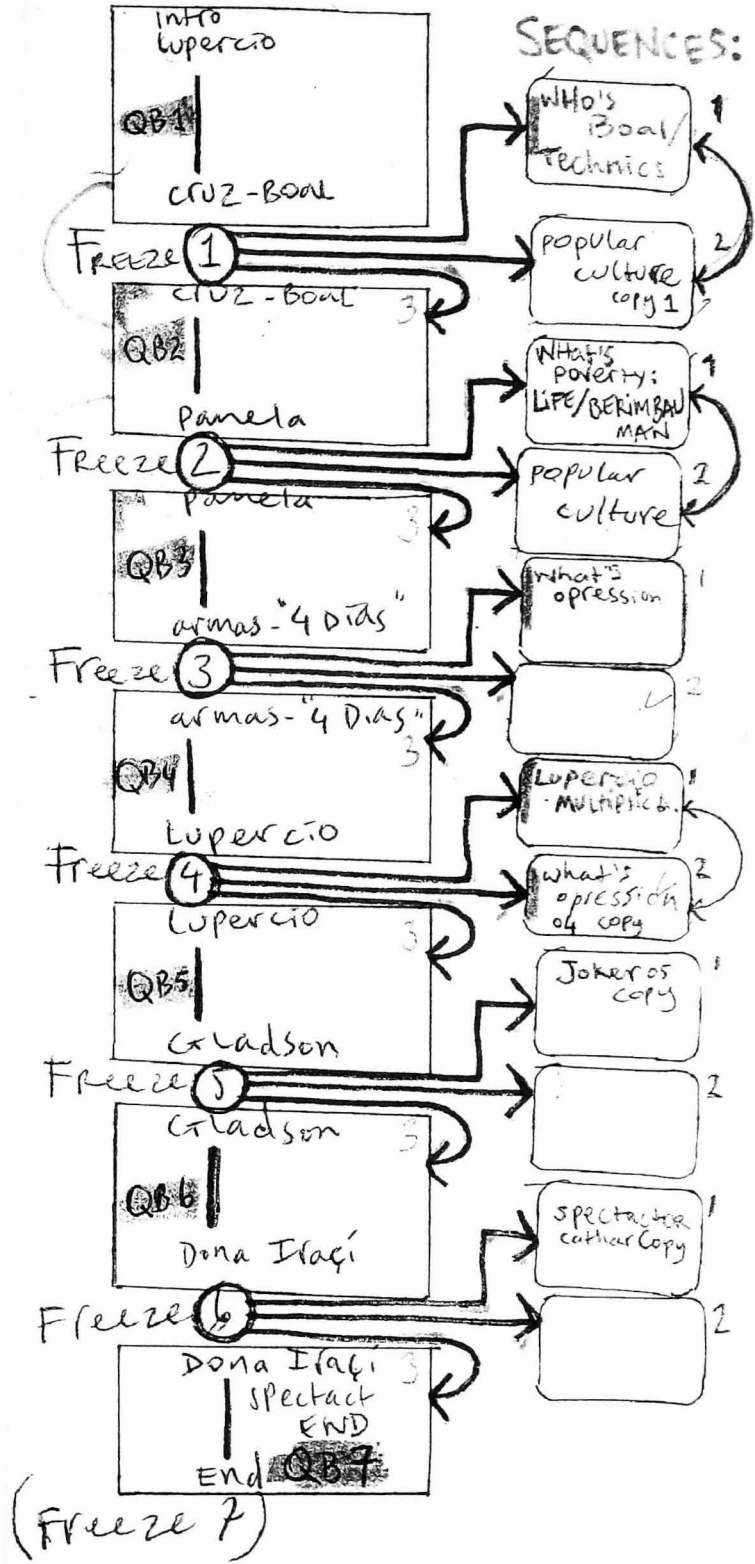
definition $P1A+Px$ = play 1, priority A (play 1 to 2)
+ 5 sec, piece X (one of the SNU's)

$P2B-Px$ = play 2, priority B (play 2 to 1)
- 5 sec, piece X

$P1A \& P2A+$ $P1A \& P2A-$ $P1B \& P2B+$ $P1B \& P2B-$

INTRODUCTION:	Personas	Occupation	Time	Costs	Act
	talk	cc. Play	IRACI	TIME	1.

PLAY QUIXAREIRA:



PLAYING #	Position 1	Position 2	Position 3
Start film	creativity <small>mst copy 1</small>	MST <small>creativity copy 2</small>	A00 <small>A00 copy</small>
A00	Game <small>mimesis copy 1</small>	mimesis <small>game copy 2</small>	A01 <small>A01 copy</small>
A01	Veronica <small>hand occupation copy 1</small>	occupation <small>hand copy 2</small>	A02 <small>A02 copy</small>
A02	instrument <small>oppression copy 1</small>	oppression <small>instrument copy 2</small>	A03 <small>A03 copy</small>
A03	mistica <small>multiplication copy 1</small>	multiplication <small>mistica copy 2</small>	A04 <small>A04 copy</small>
A04	Joker <small>therap copy 1</small>	Therapy <small>Joker copy 2</small>	A05 <small>A05 copy</small>
A05	Catharsis <small>aesthetics copy 1</small>	Aesthetics <small>catharsis copy 2</small>	A06 B01 <small>A06 copy</small>
A06 B01	culture <small>conscious copy 1</small>	val (conscious) <small>culture copy 2</small>	B02 <small>B02 copy</small>
B02	instrument copy	mimesis copy	B03
B03	mistica copy	multiplication copy	B04
B04	Joker copy	Therapy copy	B05

- * when film "#" playing then options are position 1 position 2 + position 3 copy
- * when position 1 is playing, options are position 1 copy + position 2 + position 3

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